1236

SELF-CONTROL.

12-36

SELF-CONTROL:

A NOVEL.

His warfare is within.—There unfatigued
His fervent spirit labours.—There he fights,
And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,
And never-withering wreaths, compared with which
The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.

COWPER.

FOURTH EDITION.

VOLUME I.

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THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASVATI MAHAL
1236

ADVERTISEMENT

PREFIXED TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN presenting to the public another Edition of Self-Control, the Author gratefully acknowledges the indulgence which her first literary attempt has received. The approbation with which it has been honoured, flatters her with the hope that her little work may not entirely fail in the purposes of usefulness which were her chief aim in its publication.

The commendations bestowed on Self-Control have been by no means unqualified. Strictures have been made upon various parts of the narrative, and objections stated against the probability of some of the incidents. Had these censures been pointed at the lessons which the tale was intended to convey, the Author would have felt it her duty, as well as her earnest desire, to remove them. Had the characters described in Self-Control been the portraits of living originals, she might have been bound to avail herself of any hint for rendering the likeness more complete. But where no higher interest is at stake than the credit of her own powers of invention, she feels

herself at greater liberty; and sometimes where she might have bowed to superior taste and experience, she has been unable to reconcile contradictory authorities. She is not even sure of her right to make any material alteration upon a work of fiction. Perhaps they who have before honoured it with their notice, are entitled on a second perusal to find, along with the same qualities which conciliated their favour, the same faults which amused their critical sagacity.

The language has been changed in various instances, either where the expression was faulty, or where it has been said to bear a meaning which it was not intended to convey. A few sentences have been omitted at the suggestion of a Lady, to whose powerful genius and cultivated taste the Author would willingly have shewn still greater deference; and for many of the verbal alterations she is obliged to the kindness of a friend. Since the publication, she has observed that part of Hargrave's miserable scale of duties (Vol. I. page 89) is borrowed from a work of great and deserved celebrity. The Author hopes and believes that she is not otherwise directly indebted for a line which is not marked as a quotation.*

Edinburgh, April 1811.

* Cœlebs, Vol. II. p. 100. 10th Edit.

TO

MISS JOANNA BAILLIE,

IN TESTIMONY OF

HIGH RESPECT

AND

UNFEIGNED ADMIRATION,

THESE VOLUMES ARE

AGAIN INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

SELF-CONTROL.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

SELF-CONTROL.

CHAP. I.

It was on a still evening in June, that Laura Montreville left her father's cottage, in the little village of Glenalbert, to begin a solitary ramble. Her countenance was mournful, and her step languid; for her health had suffered from confinement, and her spirits were exhausted by long attendance on the deathbed of her mother. That labour of duty had been lessened by no extrinsic circumstance; for Lady Harriet Montreville was a peevish and refractory patient; her disorder had been tedious as well as hopeless; and the humble establishment of a half-pay officer furnished no one who could lighten to Laura the burden of

constant attendance. But Laura had in herself that which softens all difficulty, and beguiles all fatigue—an active mind, a strong sense of duty, and the habit of meeting and overcoming adverse circumstances.

Captain Montreville was of a family ancient and respectable, but so far from affluent, that, at the death of his father, he found his wealth, as a younger son, to consist only of L. 500, besides the emoluments arising from a lieutenancy in a regiment of foot. Nature had given him a fine person and a pleasing address; and to the national opinions of a Scotish mother, he was indebted for an education, of which the liberality suited better with his birth than with his fortunes. He was in London negociating for the purchase of a company, when he accidentally met with Lady Harriet Bircham. Her person was shewy, and her manners had the glare, even more than the polish of high life. She had a lively imagination, and some wit; had read a little, and knew how to shew that little to advantage. The fine person of Montreville soon awakened the only sensibility of which Lady Harriet was possessed; and her preference was sufficiently visible in every step of its progress. To be distinguished by a lady of such rank and attractions, raised in Montreville all the

vanity of three-and-twenty; and, seen through that medium, Lady Harriet's charms were magnified to perfections. Montreville soon was, or fancied himself, desperately in love. He sued, and was accepted with a frankness, to which some stiff advocates for female decorum might give the harsh name of forwardness. Montreville was in love, and he was pleased to call it the candour of a noble mind.

As his regiment was at this time under orders for the West Indies, Lady Harriet prevailed on him to exchange to half-pay; and her fortune being only L.5000, economy, no less than the fondness for solitude natural to young men in love, induced him to retire to the country with his bride, who had reasons of her own for wishing to quit London. He had been educated in Scotland, and he remembered its wild scenery with the enthusiasm of a man of taste, and a painter. He settled therefore in the village of Glenalbert, near Perth; and to relieve his conscience from the load of utter idleness at twenty-three, began the superintendence of a little farm. Here the ease and vivacity of Lady Harriet made her for a while the delight of her new acquaintance. She understood all the arts of courtesy; and, happy herself, was for a while content to practise them. The

store of anecdote, which she had accumulated in her intercourse with the great, passed with her country neighbours for knowledge of the world. To Scotish ears, the accent of the higher ranks of English conveys an idea of smartness, as well as of gentility; and Lady Harriet became an universal favourite.

Those who succeed best in amusing strangers, are not, it has been remarked, the most pleasing in domestic life: they are not even always the most entertaining. Lady Harriet's spirits had ebbs, which commonly took place during her tête-à-têtes with Captain Montreville. Outward attractions, real or imaginary, are the natural food of passion; but sound principles must win confidence, and kindness of heart engage affection. Poor Montreville soon gave a mournful assent to these truths; for Lady Harriet had no principles, and her heart was a mere "pulsation on the left side." Her passion for her husband soon declined; and her more permanent appetite for admiration finding but scanty food in a solitary village, her days passed in secret discontent or open murmurings. The narrowness of her finances made her feel the necessity of economy, though it could not immediately instruct her in the art of it; and Montreville, driven from domestic habits by the

turmoil of a household, bustling without usefulness, and parsimonious without frugality, was on the point of returning to his profession, or of seeking relief in such dissipation as he had the means of obtaining, when the birth of a daughter gave a new turn to all his hopes and wishes.

'I should not wish the girl to be a beauty," said he to his friend, the village pastor. "A pretty face is of no use, but to blind a lover;"—and he sighed, as he recollected his own blindness. Yet he was delighted to see that Laura grew every day more lovely. "Wit only makes women troublesome;" said he;—but before Laura was old enough to shew the uncommon acuteness of her understanding, he had quite forgotten that he ever applied the remark to her. To amuse her infancy became his chosen recreation; to instruct her youth was afterwards his favourite employment. Lady Harriet, too, early began to seek food for her vanity in the superior endowments of her child, and she forthwith determined that Laura should be a paragon. To perfect her on nature's plan, never entered the head of this judicious matron; she preferred a plan of her own, and scorned to be indebted to the assistance of nature, for any part of the perfect structure which she resolved to rear. The temper of Laura, uni-

formly calm and placid, was by nature slightly inclined to obstinacy. Lady Harriet had predetermined that her daughter should be a model of yielding softness. Laura's spirits were inexhaustible; Lady Harriet thought nothing so interesting as a pensive beauty. Laura was both a reasonable and a reasoning creature: her mother chose that she should use the latter faculty in every instance, except where maternal authority or opinion was concerned. Innumerable difficulties, therefore, opposed Lady Harriet's system; and as violent measures ever occur first to those who are destitute of other resources, she had recourse to so many blows, disgraces, and deprivations, as must have effectually ruined the temper and dispositions of her pupil, if Laura had not soon learnt to look upon the ungoverned anger of her mother as a disease, to which she owed pity and concealment. This lesson was taught her partly by the example of her father, partly by the admonitions of Mrs Douglas, wife to the clergyman of the parish.

This lady was in every respect Lady Harriet's opposite. Of sound sense rather than of brilliant abilities; reserved in her manners, gentle in her temper, pious, humble, and upright, she spent her life in the diligent and unostentatious discharge

of Christian and feminine duty ; beloved without effort to engage the love, respected without care to secure the praise of man. She had always treated the little Laura with more than common tenderness ; and the child, unused to the fascinations of feminine kindness, repaid her attention with the utmost enthusiasm of love and veneration. With her she passed every moment allowed her for recreation ; to her she applied in every little difficulty ; from her she solicited every childish indulgence. The influence of this excellent woman increased with Laura's age, till her approbation became essential to the peace of her young friend, who instinctively sought to read, in the expressive countenance of Mrs Douglas, an opinion of all her words and actions. Mrs Douglas, ever watchful for the good of all who approached her, used every effort to render this attachment as useful as it was delightful. She gradually laid the foundation of the most valuable qualities in the mind of Laura ; by degrees teaching her to know and to love the Author of her being, to adore him as the bestower of all her innocent pleasures, to seek his favour, or to tremble at his disapprobation in every hour of her life. Lady Harriet had been educated among those who despised or neglected the peculiar tenets of the Christian faith ;

she never thought of them, therefore, except as giving scope to lively argument. On Mrs Douglas's own mind they had their proper effect; and she convinced Laura that they were not subjects for cavil, but for humble and thankful acceptation.

In as far as the religious character can be traced to causes merely natural, it may be formed by those who obtain over a mind of sensibility and reflection the influence which affection bestows, provided that they be themselves duly impressed with the importance, the harmony, the excellence of what they teach. Laura early saw the Christian doctrines, precepts, and promises, warm the heart, and guide the conduct, and animate the hopes of her whom she loved best. Sympathy and imitation, the strongest tendencies of infancy, first formed the disposition which reason afterwards strengthened into principle, and Laura grew up a pious Christian.

It is the fashion of the age to account for every striking feature of a character from education or external circumstance. Those who are fond of such speculations may trace, if they can, the self-denying habits of Laura, to the eagerness with which her enthusiastic mind imbibed the stories of self-devoting patriots and martyrs, and may find, in one lesson of her preceptress, the tint

which coloured her future days. The child had been reading a narrative of the triumphant death of one of the first reformers, and, full of the emulation which the tale of heroic virtue inspires, exclaimed, her eyes flashing through their tears, her little form erect with noble daring,—" Let them persecute me, and I will be a martyr." " You may be so now, to-day, every day," returned Mrs. Douglas. " It was not at the stake that these holy men began their self-denial. They had before taken up their cross daily ; and whenever, from a regard to duty, you resign any thing that is pleasing or valuable to you, you are for the time a little martyr."

In a solitary village, remote from her equals in age and rank, Laura necessarily lived much alone ; and in solitude she acquired a grave and contemplative turn of mind. Far from the scenes of dissipation and frivolity, conversant with the grand and the sublime in nature, her sentiments assumed a corresponding elevation. She had heard that there was vice in the world : she knew that there was virtue in it ; and, little acquainted with other minds, deeply studious of her own, she concluded that all mankind were, like herself, engaged in a constant endeavour after excellence ; that success in this struggle was at once virtue and

happiness, while failure included misery as well as guilt. The habit of self-examination, early formed, and steadily maintained, made even venial trespass appear the worst of evils;—while, in the labours of duty and the pleasures of devotion, she found joys which sometimes rose to rapture.

The capricious unkindness of her mother gave constant exercise to her fortitude and forbearance, while the principle of charity, no less than the feelings of benevolence, led to frequent efforts of self-denial. The latter virtue became daily more necessary, for mismanagement had now brought her mother's fortune almost to a close; and Captain Montreville, while he felt that he was injuring his child, could not prevail on himself to withhold from Lady Harriet the control of what he considered as her own, especially as her health was such as to afford a plea for indulgence.

Laura had reached her sixteenth year, when Mr Douglas was induced, by a larger benefice, to remove to a parish almost twenty miles distant from Glenalbert; and parting with her early friend, was the severest sorrow that Laura had ever yet known. Captain Montreville promised that his daughter should often visit the new parsonage; but Lady Harriet's increasing illness long prevented the performance of his promise. After

a confinement of many months she died, and was lamented by her husband with that sort of sorrow which it usually costs a man to part with an object which he is accustomed to see, when he knows that he shall see it no more.

For the first time since her mother's funeral, Captain Montreville prevailed on his daughter to take a solitary walk. Slowly she ascended the hill that overlooked the village, and, stopping near its brow, looked back towards the churchyard, to observe a brown hillock that marked the spot where her mother slept. Tears filled her eyes, as, passing over long intervals of unkindness, she recollected some casual proof of maternal love; and they fell fast as she remembered, that for that love she could now make no return. She turned to proceed;—and the moist eye sparkled with pleasure, the faded cheek glowed with more than the flush of health, when she beheld springing towards her the elegant, the accomplished, Colonel Hargrave. Forgotten was languor; forgotten was sorrow; for Laura was just seventeen, and Colonel Hargrave was the most ardent, the most favoured of lovers. His person was symmetry itself; his manners had all the fascination that vivacity and intelligence, joined to the highest po-

lish, can bestow. His love for Laura suited with the impetuosity of his character, and for more than a year he had laboured with assiduity and success to inspire a passion corresponding to his own. Yet it was not Hargrave whom Laura loved; for the being on whom she doated had no resemblance to him, except in externals. It was a creature of her imagination, pure as her own heart, yet impassioned as the wildest dreams of fiction,—intensely susceptible of pleasure, and keenly alive to pain, yet ever ready to sacrifice the one and to despise the other. This ideal being, clothed with the fine form, and adorned with the insinuating manners, and animated with the infectious love of Hargrave, what heart of woman could resist? Laura's was completely captivated.

Hargrave, charmed with her consummate loveliness, pleased with her cheerful good sense, and fascinated with her matchless simplicity, at first sought her society without thought but of present gratification, till he was no longer master of himself. He possessed an ample fortune, besides the near prospect of a title; and nothing was farther from his thoughts, than to make the poor unknown Laura a sharer in these advantages. But Hargrave was not yet a villain, and he shuddered at the thought of seduction.

"I will see her only *once* more," said he, "and then tear myself from her for ever."—"Only this once," said he, while day after day he continued to visit her,—to watch with delight, and to cherish with eager solicitude, the tenderness which, amidst her daily increasing reserve, his practised eye could distinguish. The passion which we do not conquer, will in time reconcile us to any means that can aid its gratification. "To leave her now would be dishonourable—it would be barbarous," was his answer to his remonstrating conscience, as he marked the glow of her complexion at his approach, the tremor of her hand at his pressure. "I cannot, indeed, make her my wife. The woman whom I marry, must assist in supporting the rank which she is to fill. But Laura is not made for high life. Short commerce with the world would destroy half her witchery. Love will compensate to us for every privation. I will hide her and myself from a censorious world; she loves solitude; and, with her, solitude will be delightful."—He forgot that solitude is delightful to the innocent alone.

Meantime, the artless Laura saw, in his highly-coloured pictures of happy love, only scenes of domestic peace and literary leisure; and, judging of his feelings by her own, dreamed not of ought

that would have disgraced the loves of angels. Tedious weeks of absence had intervened since their last meeting; and Hargrave's resolution was taken. To live without her was impossible; and he was determined to try whether he had overrated the strength of her affection, when he ventured to hope that to it she would sacrifice her all. To meet her thus unexpectedly filled him with joy, and the heart of Laura throbbed quick as he expressed his rapture. Never had his professions been so ardent; and, softened by sorrow and by absence, never had Laura felt such seducing tenderness as now stole upon her. Unable to speak, and unconscious of her path, she listened with silent rapture to the glowing language of her lover, till his entreaties wrung from her a reluctant confession of her preference. Unmindful of the feeling of humiliation that makes the moment of such a confession, of all others, the least favourable to a lover's boldness, Hargrave poured forth the most vehement expressions of passion; while, shrinking into herself, Laura now first observed, that the shades of evening were closing fast, while their lonely path led through a wood that climbed the rocky hill.

She stopped.—" I must return," said she, " my father will be anxious for me at this hour."

"Talk not now of returning," cried Hargrave impetuously, "trust yourself to a heart that adores you. Reward all my lingering pains, and let this happy hour begin a life of love and rapture."

Laura, wholly unconscious of his meaning, looked up in his face with an innocent smile. "I have often taxed you with raving," said she, "now, I am sure, you must admit the charge."

"Do not sport with me, loveliest," cried Hargrave, "nor waste these precious moments in cold delay. Leave forms to the frozen hearts that wait them, and be from this hour mine, wholly and for ever."

Laura threw a tearful glance on her mourning habit. "Is this like bridal attire?" said she: "Would you bring your nuptial festivities into the house of death, and mingle the sound of your marriage vow with my mother's dying groans?"

"Can this simplicity be affected," thought Hargrave. "Is it that she will not understand me?" He examined her countenance. All there was candour and unsuspecting love. Her arm rested on his with confiding pressure, and for a moment Hargrave faltered in his purpose. The next, he imagined that he had gone too far to recede; and clasping her to his breast with all the

vehemence of passion, he urged his suit in language yet more unequivocal. No words can express her feelings, when, the veil thus rudely torn from her eyes, she saw her pure, her magnanimous Hargrave—the god of her idolatry, degraded to a sensualist—a seducer. Casting on him a look of mingled horror, dismay, and anguish, she exclaimed, "Are you so base?" and freeing herself, with convulsive struggle, from his grasp, sunk without sense or motion to the ground.

As he gazed on the death-pale face of Laura, and raised her lifeless form from the earth, compassion, which so often survives principle, overpowered all Hargrave's impetuous feelings; and they were succeeded by the chill of horror, as the dreadful idea occurred to him, that she was gone for ever. In vain he chafed her cold hands, tried to warm her to life in his bosom, bared her's to the evening-breeze, and distractedly called for help; while, with agony, which every moment increased, he remembered that no human help was near. No sign of returning life appeared. At last he recollected that, in their walks, they had at some distance crossed a little stream, and starting up with renovated hope, he ran to it with the speed of lightning: but the way, which was so short as he passed it before, now seemed length-

ened without end. At last he reached it; and filling his hat with water, returned with his utmost speed. He darted forward till he found himself at the verge of the wood, and then first perceived that he had mistaken the path. As he retraced his steps, a thousand times he cursed his precipitancy, in not having with more caution ascertained the sentiments of his mistress, ere he permitted his licentious purpose to be seen. After a search, prolonged by his own frantic impatience, he arrived at the spot where he left her;—but no Laura was there. He called wildly on her name—he was answered by the mountain-echo alone. After seeking her long, a hope arose that she had been able to reach the village; and thither he determined to return, that, should his hope prove groundless, he might at least procure assistance in his search.

As he approached the little garden that surrounded Captain Montreville's cottage, he with joy perceived a light in the window of Laura's apartment; and never, in the most cheerful scenes, had he beheld her with such delight as he did now, when every gesture seemed the expression of unutterable anguish. He drew nearer, and saw despair painted on her every feature; and he felt how tender was the love that could thus mourn his

degeneracy, and its own blighted hopes. If she could thus feel for his guilt, the thought irresistibly pressed on his mind, with what bitterness would she feel her own. Seduction, he perceived, would with her be a work of time and difficulty; while, could he determine to make her his wife, he was secure of her utmost gratitude and tenderness. The known honour, too, of Captain Montreville made the seduction of his daughter rather a dangerous exploit; and Colonel Hargrave knew, that, in spite of the license of the times, should he destroy the daughter's honour, and the father's life, he would no longer be received, even in the most fashionable circles, with the cordiality which he could at present command. The dignified beauty of Laura would grace a coronet, and more than excuse the weakness which raised her to that distinction:—his wife would be admired and followed, while all her affections would be his alone. In fancy he presented her glittering with splendour, or majestic in unborrowed loveliness, to his companions; saw the gaze of admiration follow wherever she turned;—and that thought determined him. He would go next morning, and in form commence honourable lover, by laying his pretensions before Captain Montreville. Should Laura have acquainted her

father with the adventures of the evening, he might feel some little awkwardness in his first visit; but she might perhaps have kept his secret; and, at all events, his generous intentions would repair his offence. Satisfied with himself, he retired to rest, and enjoyed a repose that visited not the pillow of the innocent Laura.

CHAP. II.

SCARCELY had Hargrave quitted Laura, when her senses began to return, and with them an indefinite feeling of danger and alarm. The blood gushing from her mouth and nostrils, she quickly revived to a full sense of her situation, and instinctively endeavoured to quit a spot now so dark and lonely. Terror gave her strength to proceed. Every path in her native woods was familiar to her: she darted through them with what speed she could command; and, reckless of all danger but that from which she fled, she leapt from the projecting rocks, or gradually descended from the more fearful declivities, by clinging to the trees which burst from the fissures; till, exhausted with fatigue, she reached the valley, and entered the garden that surrounded her home. Here, supported no longer by the sense of danger, her spirits utterly failed her; and she threw herself on the ground, without a wish but to die.

From this state she was roused by the voice of her father, who, on the outside of the fence, was inquiring of one of the villagers, whether she had been seen. Wishing, she scarcely knew why, to escape all human eyes, she rose, and, without meeting Captain Montreville, gained her own apartment. As she closed her door, and felt for a moment the sense of security, which every one experiences in the chamber which he calls his own,—"Oh!" cried she, "that I could thus shut out the base world for ever."

There was in Laura's chamber one spot, which had, in her eyes, something of holy, for it was hallowed by the regular devotions of her life. On *it* she had breathed her first infant prayer. *There* shone on her the eastern sun, as she offered her morning tribute of praise. *There* first fell the shades of evening that invited her to implore the protection of her God. On that spot she had so often sought consolation, so often found her chief delight, that it was associated in her mind with images of hope and comfort; and springing towards it, she now almost unconsciously dropped upon her knees. While she poured forth her soul in prayer, her anguish softened into resignation; and with the bitter tears of disappointment, those of gratitude mingled, while she thanked Him who,

though He had visited her with affliction, had preserved her from guilt.

She rose, composed though wretched, resigned though hopeless; and, when summoned to supper, had sufficient recollection to command her voice, while she excused herself on the plea of a violent head-ache. Left to herself, she passed the sleepless night, now in framing excuses for her lover, now in tormenting reflections on her mistaken estimate of his character; and in bitter regrets that what seemed so excellent should be marred with so foul a stain. But Laura's thoughts were so habitually the prelude to action, that, even in the severest conflict of her powers, she was not likely to remain long in a state of ineffective meditation. "What ought I now to do?" was a question which, from childhood, Laura had every hour habitually asked herself; and the irresistible force of the habit of many years, brought the same question to her mind when she rose with the dawn.

With a heavy heart, she was obliged to confess, that delicacy, no less than prudence, must forbid all future intercourse with Hargrave. But he had for some time been a constant visitor at the cottage, till excluded by the increasing illness of Lady Harriet. He might now renew his visits,

and how was it possible to prevent this? Should she refuse to see him, her father must be made acquainted with the cause of such a refusal, and she could not doubt that the consequences would be such as she shuddered to think of. She groaned aloud as the horrid possibility occurred to her, that her father might avenge her wrongs at the expence of his virtue and his life—become for her sake a murderer, or fall by a murderer's hand. She instantly resolved to conceal for ever the insult she had received; and to this resolution she determined that all other circumstances should bend. Yet should she receive Colonel Hargrave as formerly, what might he not have the audacity to infer? How could she make him fully sensible of her indignant feelings, yet act such a part as might deceive the penetration of her father? Act a part!—deceive her father! Laura's thoughts were usually clear and distinct; and there was something in this distinct idea of evasion and deceit, that sickened her very soul. This was the first system of concealment which had ever darkened her fair and candid mind; and she wept bitterly when she convinced herself, that from such conduct there was no escape.

She sat lost in these distressing reflections, till the clock struck the hour of breakfast; then re-

collecting that she must not suffer her appearance to betray her, she ran to her glass, and with more interest than she had perhaps ever before felt in the employment, proceeded to dress her countenance to advantage. She bathed her swollen eyes, shaded them with the natural ringlets of her dark hair, rubbed her wan cheeks till their colour returned, and then entered the parlour with an overacted gaiety which surprised Captain Montreville. "I scarcely expected," said he, "to see you so very animated, after being so ill as to go to rest last night, for the first time in your life, without your father's blessing."

Laura, instantly sensible of her mistake, colouring, stammered something of the cheering influence of the morning air; and then meditating on a proper medium in her demeanour, sunk into so long a silence, that Captain Montreville could not have failed to remark it, had not his attention been diverted by the arrival of the newspaper, which he continued to study till breakfast was ended, when Laura gladly retired to her room.

Though the understanding of Laura was above her years, she had not escaped a mistake common to the youth of both sexes, when smarting under a recent disappointment in love—the mistake of supposing, that all the interest of life is, with re-

spect to them, at an end, and that their days must thenceforth bring only a dull routine of duties without incitement, and of toils without hope. But the leading principle of Laura's life was capable of giving usefulness even to her errors; and the gloom of the wilderness, through which her path seemed to lie, only brightened, by contrast, the splendour that lay beyond. "The world," thought she, "has now nothing to offer that I covet, and little to threaten that I fear. What then remains but to do my duty, unawed by its threatenings, unbribed by its joys. Ere this cloud darkened all my earthly prospects, I was not untaught, though I had too much forgotten the lesson, that it was not for pastime I was sent hither. I am here as a soldier, who strives in an enemy's land; as one who must run—must wrestle—must strain every nerve—exert every power, nor once shrink from the struggle till the prize is my own. Nor do I live for myself alone. I have a friend to gratify—the poor to relieve—the sorrowful to console—a father's age to comfort—a God to serve. And shall selfish feeling disincline me to such duties as these? No, with more than seeming cheerfulness, I will perform them all. I will thank Heaven for exempting me from the far heavier task of honouring and obeying a profligate."

A profligate! Must she apply such a name to Hargrave! The enthusiasm of the moment expired at the word, and the glow of virtuous resolution faded to the paleness of despondence and pain.

From a long and melancholy reverie, Laura was awakened by the sound of the garden gate, and she perceived that it was entered by Colonel Hargrave. Instinctively she was retreating from the window, when she saw him joined by her father; and, trembling lest candour was about to confess, or inadvertence to betray, what she so much wished to conceal, she continued with breathless anxiety to watch their conference.

Though Colonel Hargrave was certainly one of the best bred men in the kingdom, and, of consequence, entirely free from the awkwardness of *mauvaise honte*, it must be confessed, that he entered the presence of the father of Laura with rather less than his accustomed ease; but the cordial salutation of Captain Montreville banishing all fear that the lady had been too communicative, our lover proceeded, without any remaining embarrassment, to unfold the purpose of his visit. Nor could any one have conjectured, from the courtly condescension of the great man, that he conceived he was bestowing a benefit; nor

from the manly frankness of the other, that he considered himself as receiving a favour. Not but that the Colonel was in full possession of the pleasures of conscious generosity and condescension. So complete, indeed, was his self-approbation, that he doubted not but his present magnanimous resolve would efface from the mind of Laura all resentment for his offence. Her displeasure he thought would be very short-lived, if he were able to convince her that his fault was not premeditated. This he conceived to be an ample excuse, because he chose to consider the insult he had offered, apart from the base propensities, the unbridled selfishness which it indicated. As Laura had so well concealed his indiscretion, he was too good a politician himself to expose it; and he proceeded to make such offers in regard to settlements as suited the liberality of his character.

Captain Montreville listened with undisguised satisfaction to proposals apparently so advantageous to his beloved child; but, while he expressed his entire approbation of the Colonel's suit, regard to feminine decorum made him add, "that he was determined to put no constraint on the inclinations of his daughter." The Colonel felt a strong conviction that no constraint would be ne-

cessary: nevertheless, turning a neat period, importing his willingness to resign his love, rather than interfere with the happiness of Miss Montreville, he closed the conference, by entreating that the Captain would give him an immediate opportunity of learning his fate from the lips of the fair Laura herself.

Laura had continued to follow them with her eyes, till they entered the house together; and the next minute Captain Montreville knocked at her door.

"If your head-ache is not quite gone," said he, with a significant smile, "I will venture to recommend a physician. Colonel Hargrave is waiting to prescribe for you; and you may repay him in kind, for he tells me he has a case for your consideration."

Laura was on the point of protesting against any communication with Colonel Hargrave; but instantly recollecting the explanation which would be necessary, "I will go to him this instant," she exclaimed, with an eagerness that astonished her father.

"Surely you will first smooth these reddish locks of yours," said he, fondly stroking her dark auburn hair. "I fear so much haste may make the Colonel vain."

Laura coloured violently; for, amidst all her fears of a discovery, she found place for a strong feeling of resentment, at the easy security of forgiveness, that seemed intimated by a visit so immediately succeeding the offence. Having employed the few moments she passed at her toilette in collecting her thoughts, she descended to the parlour, fully resolved to give no countenance to the hopes her lover might have built on her supposed weakness.

The Colonel was alone; and, as she opened the door, eagerly advanced towards her. " My adored Laura," cried he, " this condescension——." Had he staid to read the pale, but resolute countenance of his " adored" Laura, he would have spared his thanks for her condescension.

She interrupted him. " Colonel Hargrave," said she, with imposing seriousness, " I have a request to make to you. Perhaps the peace of my life depends upon your compliance."

" Ah, Laura! what request can I refuse, where I have so much to ask?"

" Promise me, that you will never make known to my father—that you will take every means to conceal from him the—," she hesitated, " the—our meeting last night," she added, rejoiced to have found a palliative expression for her meaning.

"Oh! dearest Laura! forget it;—think of it no more."

"Promise—promise solemnly. If indeed," added she shuddering, while an expression of sudden anguish crossed her features "if indeed promises can weigh with such a one as you."

"For pity's sake, speak not such cutting words as those."

"Colonel Hargrave, will you give me your promise?"

"I do promise--solemnly promise. Say but that you forgive me."

"I thank you, Sir, for so far ensuring the safety of my dear father, since he might have risked his life to avenge the wrongs of his child. You cannot be surprised, if I now wish to close our acquaintance, as speedily as may be consistent with the concealment so unfortunately necessary.

Impatient to conclude an interview which tasked her fortitude to the utmost, Laura was about to retire. Hargrave seized her hand. "Surely, Laura, you will not leave me thus. You cannot refuse forgiveness to a fault caused by intemperate passion alone. The only atonement in my power, I now come to offer: my hand—my fortune—my future rank.

The native spirit, and wounded delicacy of

Laura, flashed from her eyes, while she replied: "I fear, Sir, I shall not be suitably grateful for your generosity, while I recollect the alternative you would have preferred."

This was the first time that Laura had ever appeared to her lover, other than the tender, the timid girl. From this character she seemed to have started at once into the high-spirited, the dignified woman; and, with a truly masculine passion for variety, Hargrave thought he had never seen her half so fascinating. "My angelic Laura," cried he, as he knelt before her, "lovelier in your cruelty, suffer me to prove to you my repentance—my reverence—my adoration;—suffer me to prove them to the world, by uniting our fates for ever."

"It is fit the guilty should kneel," said Laura, turning away, "but not to their fellow mortals. Rise, Sir, this homage to me is but mockery."

"Say, then, that you forgive me; say, that you will accept the tenderness, the duty of my future life."

"What! rather than control your passions, will you now stoop to receive as your wife, her whom so lately you thought vile enough for the lowest degradation? Impossible? yours I can never be. Our views, our principles, are opposite as light

and darkness. How shall I call Heaven to witness the prostitution of its own ordinances? How shall I ask the blessing of my Maker, on my union with a being at enmity with him?"

"Good heavens, Laura, will you sacrifice to a punctilio—to a fit of Calvinistic enthusiasm, the peace of my life, the peace of your own? You have owned that you love me—I have seen it—delighted seen it a thousand times—and will you now desert me for ever?"

"I do not act upon punctilio," returned Laura calmly;—"I believe I am no enthusiast. What *have* been my sentiments, is now of no importance; to unite myself with vice would be deliberate wickedness—to hope for happiness from such an union would be desperate folly."

"Dearest Laura, bound by your charms, allured by your example, my reformation would be certain, my virtue secure."

"Oh, hope it not!—Familiar with my form, my only hold on your regard, you would neglect, forsake, despise me; and who should say that my punishment was not just."

"And will you then," cried Hargrave, in an agony; "Will you then cast me off for ever? Will you drive me for ever from your heart?"

"I have now no choice—leave me—forget me

—seek some woman less fastidious; or rather endeavour, by your virtues, to deserve one superior far. Then honoured, beloved, as a husband, as a father"——The fortitude of Laura failed before the picture of her fancy, and she was unable to proceed. Determined to conceal her weakness from Hargrave, she broke from him, and hurried towards the door;—but, melting into tenderness at the thought that this interview was perhaps the last, she turned. "Oh, Hargrave," she cried, clasping her hands as in supplication, "have pity on yourself—have pity on me——forsake the fatal path on which you have entered, that, though for ever torn from you here, I may yet meet you in a better world."

She then darted from the room, leaving her lover in dumb amazement, at the conclusion of an interview so different from his expectations. For the resentment of Laura he had been prepared; but upon her determined refusal, he had never calculated, and scarcely could he now admit its reality. Could he give her credit for the professed motive of her rejection? Colonel Hargrave had nothing in himself which made it natural for him to suppose passion sacrificed to reason and principle. Had he then deceived himself,—had she never really loved him?—the suggestion was

too mortifying to be admitted. Had resentment given rise to her determination? She had spoken from the first with calmness,—at last with tenderness. Was all this but a scene of coquetry? designed to enhance her favours? The simple, the noble, the candid Laura guilty of coquetry? —impossible!

While these thoughts darted with confused rapidity through his mind, one idea alone was distinct and permanent—Laura had rejected him. This thought was torture. Strong resentment mingled with his anguish; and to inflict, on the innocent cause of it, pangs answering to those he felt, would have afforded to Hargrave the highest gratification. Though his passion for Laura was the most ardent of which he was capable, its effects, for the present, more resembled those of the bitterest hatred. That she loved him, he would not allow himself to doubt; and, therefore, he concluded that neglect would inflict the surest, as well as the most painful wound. Swearing that he would make her feel it at her heart's core, he left the cottage, strode to the village inn, surlily ordered his horses, and, in a humour compounded of revenge, impatient passion, and wounded pride, returned to his quarters at ———. His scheme of revenge had all the success that such

schemes usually have or deserve; and while, for one whole week, he deigned not, by visit or letter, to notice his mistress, the real suffering which he inflicted, did not exactly fall on her for whom he intended the pain.

CHAP. III.

To an interview which he presumed would be as delightful as interesting, Captain Montreville chose to give no interruption; and therefore he had walked out to superintend his hay-making: But, after staying abroad for two hours, which he judged to be a reasonable length for a tête-à-tête, he returned, and was a little surprised to find that the Colonel was gone. Though he entertained not a doubt of the issue of the conference, he had some curiosity to know the particulars, and summoned Laura to communicate them.

"Well, my love," said he, as the conscious Laura shut the parlour door, "is Colonel Hargrave gone?"

"Long ago, Sir."

"I thought he would have waited my return."

Laura made no answer.

"When are we to see him again?"

Laura did not know.

"Well, well," said Captain Montreville, a little impatiently, "since the Colonel is gone without talking to me, I must just hear from you what it is you have both determined on."

Laura trembled in every limb. "I knew," said she, without venturing to lift her eye, "that you would never sacrifice your child to rank or fortune; and therefore I had no hesitation in refusing Colonel Hargrave."

Captain Montreville started back with astonishment.—"Refused Colonel Hargrave!" cried he, —"Impossible—you cannot be in earnest."

Laura, with much truth, assured him that she never in her life had been more serious."

Captain Montreville was thunderstruck. Surprize for a few moments kept him silent. At last recovering himself,—"Why, Laura," said he, "what objection could you possibly make to Hargrave, —he is young, handsome, accomplished, and has shewn such generosity in his choice of you"——

"Generosity! Sir," repeated Laura.

"Yes; it was generous in Colonel Hargrave, who might pretend to the first women in the kingdom, to think of offering to share his fortune and his rank with you, who have neither."

Laura's sentiments on this subject did not ex-

actly coincide with her father's, but she remained silent while he continued : " I think I have a right to hear your objections, for I am entirely at a loss to guess them. I don't indeed know a fault Hargrave has, except perhaps a few gallantries ; which most girls of your age think a very pardonable error."

A sickness, as of death, seized Laura ; but she answered steadily. " Indeed, Sir, the Colonel's views are so different from mine—his dispositions so very unlike—so opposite, that nothing but unhappiness could possibly result from such an union. But," added she, forcing a languid smile, " we shall, if you please, discuss all this to-morrow; for, indeed, to-day, I am unable to defend my own cause with you. I have been indisposed all day."

Captain Montreville looked at Laura, and, in the alarm which her unusual paleness excited, lost all sense of the disappointment she had just caused him. He threw his arm tenderly round her—supported her to her own apartment—begged she would try to rest,—ran to seek a cordial for his darling ; and then, fearing that the dread of his displeasure should add to her disorder, hastened back to assure her that, though her happiness was

his dearest concern, he never meant to interfere with her judgment of the means by which it was to be promoted.

Tears of affectionate gratitude burst from the eyes of Laura. "My dear kind father," she cried, "let me love—let me please you—and I ask no other earthly happiness."

Captain Montreville then left her to rest; and, quite exhausted with illness, fatigue, and sorrow, she slept soundly for many hours.

The Captain spent most of the evening in ruminating on the occurrence of the day; nor did his meditations at all diminish his surprise at his daughter's unaccountable rejection of his favourite. He recollected many instances in which he thought he had perceived her partiality to the Colonel;—he perplexed himself in vain to reconcile them with her present behaviour. He was compelled at last to defer his conclusions till Laura herself should solve the difficulty. The subject was, indeed, so vexatious to him, that he longed to have his curiosity satisfied, in order finally to dismiss the affair from his mind.

Laura had long been accustomed, when assailed by any adverse circumstance, whether more trivial or more important, to seize the first opportunity of calmly considering how far she had

herself contributed to the disaster; and, as nothing is more hostile to good humour than an ill-defined feeling of self-reproach, the habit was no less useful to the regulation of our heroine's temper, than to her improvement in the rarer virtues of prudence and candour. Her first waking hour, except that which was uniformly dedicated to a more sacred purpose, she now employed in strict and impartial self-examination. She endeavoured to call to mind every part of her behaviour to Colonel Hargrave, lest her own conduct might have seemed to countenance his presumption. But in vain. She could not recollect a word, a look, even a thought, which might have encouraged his profligacy. "Yet why should I wonder," she exclaimed, "if he expected that temptation might seduce, or weakness betray me, since he knew me fallible, and of the Power by which I am upheld he thought not."

Satisfied of the purity of her conduct, she next proceeded to examine its prudence; but here she found little reason for self-gratulation. Her conscience, indeed, completely acquitted her of levity or forwardness, but its charges of imprudence she could not so easily parry. Why had she admitted a preference for a man whose moral character was so little known to her? Where slept her dis

cretion, while she suffered that preference to strengthen into passion? Why had she indulged in dreams of ideal perfection? Why had she looked for consistent virtue in a breast where she had not ascertained that piety resided? Had she allowed herself time for consideration, would she have forgotten that religion was the only foundation strong enough to support the self-denying, the purifying virtues? These prudent reflections came, in part, too late; for to love, Laura was persuaded, she must henceforth be a stranger. But to her friendships, she conceived, that they might be applicable; and she determined to make them useful in her future intercourse with her own sex; to whom, perhaps, they may be applied even with more justice than to the other.

The mind of Laura had been early stored with just and rational sentiments. These were the bullion—but it was necessary that experience should give the stamp that was to make them current in the ordinary business of life. Had she called prudence to her aid, in the first stage of her acquaintance with the insinuating Hargrave, what anguish would she not have spared herself. But if the higher wisdom be to foresee and prevent misfortune, the next degree is to make the best of it when unavoidable; and Laura resolved

that this praise at least should be her's. Fortified by this resolution, she quitted her apartment, busied herself in her domestic affairs, met her father almost with cheerfulness; and, when he renewed the subject of their last conversation, repeated, with such composure, her conviction of the dissimilarity of Hargrave's dispositions to her own, that Captain Montreville began to think he had been mistaken in his opinion of her preference. Still, however, he could not account for her rejection of an offer so unobjectionable; and he hinted a suspicion, that some of Hargrave's gallantries had been repeated to her, and perhaps with exaggeration. With trembling lips, Laura assured him she had never heard the slightest insinuation against Colonel Hargrave. Though Laura had little of romance in her composition, her father now began to imagine, that she allowed herself to cherish the romantic dream, that sympathy of souls, and exactly concordant tastes and propensities, were necessary to the happiness of wedded life. But Laura calmly declared, that her tastes were not inflexible; and that, had she intended to marry, she should have found it an easy duty to conform them to those of her husband: but that the thought of marriage was shocking to her, and that she trusted no man

would ever again think of her as a wife. Montreville, who for once suspected his daughter of a little affectation, made no effort to combat this unnatural antipathy, but trusted to time and nature for its cure.

As soon as her father left her, Laura, determined not to be brave by halves, began the painful task of destroying every relic of Hargrave's presence. She banished from her port-folio the designs he had made for her drawings, destroyed the music from which he had accompanied her, and effaced from her books the marks of his pencil. She had amused her solitary hours by drawing, in chalks, a portrait of features indelibly engraven on her recollection, and her fortitude failed her when about to consign it to the flames.—"No;" she exclaimed, "I can never part with this. This, at least, I may love unreproved," and she pressed it in agony to her heart—inwardly vowing that no human being should fill its place. But such thoughts as these could not linger in the reasonable mind of Laura. The next moment she blushed for her weakness; and, casting away its last treasure, averted her eyes till the flames had consumed it to ashes. "Now all is over," she cried, as she threw herself upon a chair and burst into tears. But, quickly wiping them

away, she resolved that she would not wilfully bind herself to the rack of recollection, and hastened to exert herself in some of her ordinary employments.

Laura was aware that the cottage, where every walk, every shrub, every flower spoke of Hargrave, was a scene unlikely to aid her purpose of forgetting him ; and, therefore, she that evening proposed to her father that they should pay their long promised visit to Mrs Douglas. He readily consented. Their journey was fixed for the following week, and Laura occupied herself in preparing for their departure, though with feelings far different from the delight, with which, a few days before, she would have anticipated a meeting with her early friend.

CHAP. IV.

Mrs Douglas observed, with satisfaction, the improved stature and increasing gracefulness of her young favourite; but she remarked, with painful interest, that the hectic of pleasure which tinged the cheek of Laura, at their meeting, faded fast to the hue of almost sickly delicacy. She soon noticed that an expression, as of sudden torture, would sometimes contract, for a moment, the polished forehead of Laura; that it was now succeeded by the smothered sigh, the compressed lip, the hasty motion which spoke strong mental effort, now subsided into the languor of deep unconquered melancholy. Such depression Mrs Douglas could not attribute to the loss of a mother, whose treatment furnished more occasions of patience than of gratitude; and she anxiously longed to discover its real cause.

But it was soon evident that this was a secret which Laura had no intention to disclose. A

glance from the inquiring eye of Mrs Douglas, at once recalled her to constrained cheerfulness; and the presence of Captain Montreville seemed always to put her entirely upon her guard. While he was in the room, she talked, read aloud, or played with the children, as if determined to be amused; but as soon as he retired, she relapsed, like one wearied with effort, into languor and melancholy, till recalled to herself by the scrutinizing looks of Mrs Douglas.

Even in their most private conversations, the name of Hargrave never passed her lips. Months, indeed, had elapsed since Laura could have pronounced that name without painful emotion—to utter it now was become almost impossible. She felt that she had no right to publish, while she rejected, his addresses; and she felt an invincible repugnance to expose even his failings, but much more his vices, to the censure of the respectable Mrs Douglas. Soon after she first saw Hargrave, she had written to her friend a warm eulogium of his fine person, captivating manners, and elegant accomplishments. Mrs Douglas, in reply, had desired to hear more of this phœnix; but before Laura again found leisure to write, she was no longer inclined to make Hargrave her subject, and her friend had desisted from fruitless inquiries.

Mrs Douglas had lately had an opportunity of judging for herself of the Colonel's attractions; and, so great did they appear to her, that it was with extreme astonishment she heard of his late disappointment from Captain Montreville, who did not feel his daughter's delicacy on the subject. This communication served only to increase her perplexity as to the cause of Laura's depression; yet she felt herself relieved from the apprehension, that hopeless love for Hargrave was wasting the health and peace of her dear Laura. Still, however, she continued to watch that expressive countenance, to weigh every word which might tend to unfold the enigma. In vain!—Laura studiously avoided all approach to an explanation. Mrs Douglas's anxiety now increased to a painful extreme. She felt how necessary to female inexperience is the advice of a female,—how indispensable to feminine sorrows are the consolations of feminine sympathy; and she resolved that no false delicacy should withhold her from offering such relief as she might have power to bestow.

One morning after the gentlemen had left them alone together, Mrs Douglas, meditating on the best means of introducing the subject she had so much at heart, had fallen into a long silence;

when, looking up, she perceived that Laura had let fall her work, and was sitting with her eyes fixed, and her arms dropped, in the attitude of one whose thoughts had no connection with present objects. At the heavy sigh with which Mrs Douglas surveyed her, she started, and was rousing her attention to some indifferent subject, when Mrs Douglas, kindly taking her hand, said, "My dear child, whatever may be necessary with others, I beseech you to be under no constraint with me. I am far from wishing to intrude into your confidence, but do not add the pain of constraint to anguish which already seems so oppressive."

Large tears stole from under Laura's downcast eyelids; but she spoke not. Mrs Douglas continued—"If my best advice, my most affectionate sympathy, can be of use to you, I need not say you may command them."

Laura threw herself into the arms of her friend, and for some moments sobbed with uncontrolled emotion; but soon composing herself, she replied: "If advice could have profited, if consolation could have reached me, where should I have sought them unless from you, respected friend of my youth;—but the warning voice of wisdom

comes now too late, and even your sympathy would be bestowed in vain."

"Heaven forbid that my dearest Laura should be beyond the reach of comfort. That is the lot of guilt alone."

"I am grateful to Heaven," said Laura, "that I have been less guilty than imprudent. But, my best friend, let us quit this subject. This wretchedness cannot, shall not last. Only let me implore you not to notice it to my father. You know not what horrors might be the consequence."

Mrs Douglas shook her head. "Ah! Laura," said she, "that path is not the path of safety in which you would elude a father's eye." Laura's glance met that of her friend; and she read suspicion there. The thought was so painful to her, that she was on the point of disclosing all; but she remembered that the reasons which had at first determined her to silence, were not altered by any one's suspicions, and she restrained herself. Colonel Hargrave had cruelly wronged and insulted her—she ought therefore to be doubly cautious how she injured him. Sympathy, in her case, she felt, would be a dangerous indulgence; and, above all, she shrunk with horror from exposing her lover, or his actions, to detestation or contempt. "Perhaps the time may come," said

she, pursuing her reflections aloud, " when you will be convinced that I am incapable of any clandestine purpose. At present your compassion might be a treacherous balm to me, when my best wisdom must be to forget that I have need of pity."

Mrs Douglas looked on the open candid countenance of Laura, and her suspicions vanished in a moment; but they returned when her young friend reiterated her entreaties that she would not hint the subject to her father. Laura was, however, fortified in her resolutions of concealment, by an opinion she had often heard Mrs Douglas express, that the feelings of disappointed love should by women be kept inviolably secret. She was decisively giving a new turn to the conversation, when it was interrupted by the entrance of the gentlemen; and Mrs Douglas, a little hurt at the steadiness of her young friend, more than half-determined to renew the subject no more.

A letter lay on the table, which the post had brought for Captain Montreville; he read it with visible uneasiness, and immediately left the room. Laura perceived his emotion; and, ever alive to the painful subject nearest her heart, instantly concluded that the letter brought a confession from Hargrave. She heard her father's disordered

steps pacing the apartment above, and earnestly longed, yet feared to join him. Anxiety at length prevailed; and she timidly approached the door of Captain Montreville's chamber. She laid her hand upon the lock; paused again, with failing courage, and was about to retire, when her father opened the door. " Come in, my love," said he, " I wish to speak with you." Laura, trembling, followed him into the room. " I find," said he, " we must shorten our visit to our kind friends here, and travel homewards. I must prepare," continued he, and he sighed heavily, " I must prepare for a much longer journey."

Laura's imagination took the alarm; and, forgetting how unlikely it was that Captain Montreville should disclose such a resolution to her, she thought only of his intending to prepare for a journey whence there is no return, before he should stake his life against that of Hargrave. She had not power to speak; but, laying her hand on her father's arm, she cast on him a look of imploring agony. " Do not be alarmed my love," said he: " I shall, in a few days, carry your commands to London; but I do not mean to be long absent."

Laura's heart leapt light. " To London, Sir?" said she, in a tone of cheerful inquiry.

"Yes, my dear child; I must go, and leave you alone at home—while yet I have a home to shelter you. Had you resembled any other girl of your age, I should have said no more of this—but I will have no concealments from you. Read this letter."

It was from Captain Montreville's agent, and briefly stated, that the merchant in whose hands he had lately vested his all, in an annuity on his daughter's life, was dead; and that, owing to some informality in the deed, the heirs refused to make any payment. Having read the letter, Laura continued for some moments to muse on its contents, with her eyes vacantly fixed on the civil expression of concern with which it concluded. "How merciful it is," she exclaimed, "that this blow fell not till my mother was insensible of the stroke."

"For myself," said Captain Montreville, "I think I could have borne it well; but this was the little independence I thought I had secured for you, dear darling of my heart; and now"——The father's lip quivered, and his eyes filled; but he turned aside, for he could *be* tender—but would not *seem* so.

"Dearest father," said Laura, "think not of me. Could you have given me millions, I should

still have been dependent on the care of Providence, even for my daily bread. My dependence will now only be a little more perceptible. But perhaps," added she, cheerfully, "something may be done to repair this disaster. Warren's heirs will undoubtedly rectify this mistake, when they find it has been merely accidental. At all events, a journey, to London will amuse you; and I shall manage your harvest so actively in your absence!"

Captain Montreville had, from Laura's infancy, been accustomed to witness instances of her fortitude, to see her firm under unmerited chastisement, and patient under bodily suffering—but her composure on this occasion, so far surpassed his expectations, that he was inclined to attribute it less to fortitude than to inconsideration. "How light-hearted is youth," thought he, as he quitted her. "This poor child has never seen the harsh features of poverty, but when distance softened their deformity, and she now beholds his approach without alarm." He was mistaken. Laura had often taken a near survey of poverty. She had entered the cabins of the very poor—seen infancy squalid, and youth spiritless—manhood exhausted by toil, and age pining without comfort. In fancy she had substituted her-

self in the place of these victims of want; felt by sympathy their varieties of wretchedness; and she justly considered poverty among the heaviest of human calamities. But she was sensible that her firmness might support her father's spirits, or her weakness serve to aggravate his distress; and she wisely pushed aside the more formidable mischief, which she could not surmount, to attend to the more immediate evil, which she felt it in her power to alleviate.

The moment she was alone, Laura fell on her knees: "Oh! Heavenly Providence," she cried, "save, if it be thy will, my dear father's age from poverty, though, like my great Master, I should not have where to lay my head." She continued to pray long and fervently, for spirits to cheer her father under his misfortune; and for fortitude to endure her own peculiar sorrow, in her estimation so much more bitter.

Having implored the blessing of Heaven on her exertions, she next began to practise them. She wandered out to court the exhilarating influence of the mountain air; and studiously turning her attention to all that was gay, sought to rouse her spirits for the task which she had assigned them. She was so successful, that she was that evening the life of the little friendly circle. She talked,

sung and recited—she exerted all the wit and vivacity of which she was mistress—she employed powers of humour which she herself had scarcely been conscious of possessing. Her gaiety soon became contagious. Scarcely a trace appeared of the anxious fears of Mrs Douglas, or the parental uneasiness of Captain Montreville, and fewer still of the death-stroke which disappointed confidence had carried to the peace of poor Laura. But when she retired to the solitude of her chamber, her exhausted spirits found relief in tears. She felt, that long to continue her exertion would be impossible; and, in spite of reason, which told of the danger of solitude, anticipated, with pleasure, the moment when total seclusion should leave her free to undisguised wretchedness.

Laura was not yet, however, destined to the hopeless task of combating misplaced affection in entire seclusion. On the following morning she found a stranger at the breakfast table. He seemed a man of information and accomplishments. An enthusiast in landscape, he was come to prosecute his favourite study amidst the picturesque magnificence of Highland scenery: and the appearance and manners of a gentleman, furnished him with a sufficient introduction to Highland hospitality. Relieved, by his presence, from the

task of entertaining, Laura scarcely listened to the conversation, till the stranger, having risen from table, began to examine a picture which occupied a distinguished place in Mrs Douglas's parlour. It was the work of Laura, who was no mean proficient. She had early discovered what is called a genius for painting; that is to say, she had exercised much of her native invention and habitual industry on the art. Captain Montreville added to his personal instructions, every facility which it was in his power to bestow. Even when her performances had little in them of wonderful but their number, her acquaintance pronounced them wonderful; and they obtained the more useful approbation of a neighbouring nobleman, who invited her to copy from any part of his excellent collection. Her progress was now, indeed, marvellous to those who were new to the effects of unremitting industry, guided by models of exquisite skill. Having long and sedulously copied from pieces of acknowledged merit, she next attempted an original; and having with great care composed and with incredible labour finished her design, she dedicated to Mrs Douglas the first fruits of her improved talents, in the picture which the stranger was now contemplating. Willing that her young friend should reap advantage

from the criticisms of a judicious artist, Mrs Douglas encouraged him to speak freely of the beauties and defects of the piece. After remarking that there was some skill in the composition, much interest in the principal figure, and considerable freedom in the touch, he added, "If this be, as I suppose, the work of a young artist, I shall not be surprised that he one day rise both to fame and fortune."

Mrs Douglas was about to direct his praise to its rightful owner, but Laura silenced her by a look. The stranger's last expression had excited an interest which no other earthly subject could have awakened. Her labours might, it appeared, relieve the wants or increase the comforts of her father's age; and, with a face which glowed with enthusiasm, and eyes which sparkled with renovated hope, she eagerly advanced to question the critic as to the value of her work. In reply, he named a price so far exceeding her expectations, that her resolution was formed in a moment. She would accompany her father to London, and there try what pecuniary advantage was to be derived from her talent.

On a scheme which was to repair all her father's losses, prudence had not time to pause; and, feeling company a restraint on her pleasure,

Laura ran to her apartment, rather to enjoy than to reconsider her plan. Having spent some time in delightful anticipation of the pleasure which her father would take in the new team and thrashing-mill with which she would adorn his farm, and the comfort he would enjoy in the new books and easy sofa with which her labours would furnish his library, she recollected a hundred questions which she wished to ask the stranger, concerning the best means of disposing of her future productions, and she ran down stairs to renew the conversation.—But the parlour was empty, the stranger was gone. No matter. No trifle could at this moment have discomposed Laura; and, with steps as light as a heart from which, for a time, all selfish griefs were banished, she crossed the little lawn in search of her father.

The moment she overtook him, locking her arm in his, and looking smilingly up in his face, she began so urgent an entreaty to be admitted as the companion of his journey, that Captain Montreville, with some curiosity, inquired what had excited in her this sudden inclination to travel? Laura blushed and hesitated; for though her plan had, in her own opinion, all the charms which we usually attribute to the new-born children of our fancy, she felt that an air of more prudence and

forethought might be necessary to render it equally attractive in the eyes of Captain Montreville. She exerted, however, all the rhetoric she could at that moment command, to give her scheme a plausible appearance. With respect to herself, she was entirely successful; and she ventured to cast a look of triumphant appeal on her father. Captain Montreville, unwilling to refuse the request of his darling, remained silent; but at the detail of her plan, he shook his head. Now, to a projector of eighteen, a shake of the head is, of all gestures, the most offensive; and the smile which usually accompanies it, miserably perverts the office of a smile. Tears, half of sorrow, half of vexation, forced their way to the eyes of Laura; and she walked silently on, without courage to renew the attack, till they were joined by Mrs Douglas.

Disconcerted by her ill success with her father, Laura felt little inclination to subject her scheme to the animadversions of her friend; but Captain Montreville, expecting an auxiliary, by whose aid he might conquer the weakness of yielding without conviction, called upon Mrs Douglas, in a manner which shewed him secure of her reply, to give her opinion of Laura's proposal. Mrs Douglas, who had heard, with a degree of horror, of

the intention to consign Laura to solitude in her present state of suppressed dejection, and who considered new scenes and new interests as indispensable to her restoration, interpreting the asking looks of the fair petitioner, surprised Captain Montreville by a decided verdict in her favour. Rapturously thanking her advocate, Laura now renewed her entreaties with such warmth, that her father, not possessed of that facility in refusing which results from practice, gave a half-reluctant acquiescence. The delight which his consent conveyed to Laura, which sparkled in her expressive features, and animated her artless gestures, converted his half-extorted assent into cordial concurrence; for to the defects of any scheme which gave her pleasure, he was habitually blind.

In the course of the evening, Captain Montreville announced that, in order to give his daughter time to prepare for her journey, it would be necessary for them to return to Glenalbert on the following morning.

While Mrs Douglas was assisting Laura to pack up her little wardrobe, she attempted to break her guarded silence on the subject of Hargrave, by saying, "I doubt this same journey of your's will prevent Colonel Hargrave from try-

ing the effects of perseverance, which I used to think the most infallible resort in love, as well as in more serious undertakings."

Laura began a most diligent search for something upon the carpet.

"Poor Hargrave," Mrs Douglas resumed, "he is a great favourite of mine. I wish he had been more successful."

Laura continued industriously cramming a band-box.

"All these gowns and petticoats will crush your new bonnet to pieces, my dear."

Laura suddenly desisted from her employment, rose, and turning full towards Mrs Douglas, said,—"It is unkind, it is cruel, thus to urge me, when you know that duty more than inclination keeps me silent."

"Pardon me, my dear Laura," said Mrs Douglas, "I have no wish to persecute you; but you know I was ignorant that Colonel Hargrave was our interdicted subject."

She then entered on another topic; and Laura, vexed at the partial disclosure she had inadvertently made, uneasy at being the object of constant scrutiny, and hurt at being obliged to thwart the habitual openness of her temper, felt less sorry than relieved as she sprung into the car-

riage which was to convey her to Glenalbert. So true is it, that concealment is the bane of friendship.

Other interests, too, quickened her desire to return home. She longed, with a feeling which could not be called hope, though it far exceeded curiosity, to know whether Hargrave had called or written during her absence; and the moment the chaise stopped, she flew to the table where the letters were deposited to wait their return. There were none for her. She interrupted Nanny's expression of joy at the sight of her mistress, by asking who had called while they were from home. "Nobody but Miss Willis." Laura's eyes filled with tears of bitterness. "I am easily relinquished," thought she—"but it is better that it should be so;" and she dashed away the drops as they rose.

She would fain have vented her feelings in the solitude of her chamber; but this was her father's first return to a widowed home, and she would not leave him to its loneliness. She entered the parlour. Captain Montreville was already there; and, cheerfully welcoming him home, she shook up the cushion of an elbow-chair by the fire-side, and invited him to sit. "No, love," said he, gently compelling her, "do you take that seat;

it was your mother's." Laura saw his lip quiver, and, suppressing the sob that swelled her bosom, she tenderly withdrew him from the room, led him to the garden, invited his attention to her new-blown carnations, and gradually diverted his regard to such cheerful objects, that, had Captain Montreville examined what was passing in his own mind, he must have confessed that he felt the loss of Lady Harriet less as a companion than an antagonist. She was more a customary something which it was unpleasant to miss from its place, than a real want which no substitute could supply. Laura's conversation, on the contrary, amusing without effort, ingenious without constraint, and rational without stiffness, furnished to her father a real and constant source of enjoyment; because, wholly exempt from all desire to shine, she had leisure to direct to the more practicable art o pleasing, those efforts by which so many others vainly attempt to dazzle.

CHAP. V.

THE three following days Laura employed in making arrangements for her journey. Desirous to enliven the solitude in which she was about to leave her only attendant, she consigned the care of the cottage, during her absence, to the girl's mother, who was likewise her own nurse; and cautious of leaving to the temptations of idleness, one for whose conduct she felt herself in some sort accountable, she allotted to Nanny the task of making winter clothing for some of the poorest inhabitants of Glenalbert; a task which her journey prevented her from executing herself. Nor were the materials of this little charity subtracted from her father's scanty income, but deducted from comforts exclusively her own.

Though, in the bustle of preparation, scarcely a moment remained unoccupied, Laura could not always forbear from starting at the sound of the knocker, or following with her eyes the form of

a horseman winding through the trees. In vain she looked—in vain she listened. The expected stranger came not—the expected voice was unheard. She tried to rejoice at the desertion: "I am glad of it," she would say to herself, while bitter tears were bursting from her eyes. She often reproached herself with the severity of her language at her last interview with Hargrave. She asked herself what right she had to embitter disappointment by unkindness, or to avenge insult by disdain. Her behaviour appeared to her, in the retrospect, ungentle, unfeminine, unchristian. Yet she did not for a moment repent her rejection, nor waver for a moment in her resolution to adhere to it. Her soul sickened at the thought, that she had been the object of licentious passion merely; and she loathed to look upon her own lovely form, while she thought that it had seduced the senses, but failed to touch the soul of Hargrave.

Amidst these employments and feelings the week had closed; and the Sabbath evening was the last which Laura was to spend at Glenalbert. That evening had long been her chosen season of meditation, the village church-yard the scene where she loved to "go forth to meditate." The way which led to it, and to it alone, was a shady

green lane, gay with veronica and hare-bell, undefaced by wheels, but marked in the middle with one distinct track, and impressed towards the sides with several straggling half-formed foot-paths. The church itself stood detached from the village, on a little knoll, on the west side of which the burial-ground sloped towards the woody bank that bounded a brawling mountain-stream. Thither Laura stole, when the sun, which had been hid by the rugged hill, again rolling forth from behind it, poured through the long dale his rays upon this rustic cemetery; the only spot in the valley sufficiently elevated to catch his parting beam.

"How long, how deep is the shadow—how glorious in brightness the reverse," said she, as she seated herself under the shade of the newly raised grave-stone which marked the place of her mother's rest; and turning her mind's eye from what seemed a world of darkness, she raised it to scenes of everlasting light. Her fancy, as it soared to regions of bliss without alloy, looked back with something like disgust on the labours which were to prepare her for their enjoyment, and a feeling almost of disappointment and impatience accompanied her recollection, that the pilgrimage was to all appearance only beginning. But she

checked the feeling as it rose, and, in penitence and resignation, raised her eyes to heaven. They rested as they fell, upon a stone marked with the name and years of one who died in early youth. Laura remembered her well—she was the beauty of Glenalbert; but her lover left her for a richer bride, and her proud spirit sunk beneath the stroke. The village artist had depicted her want of resignation in a rude sculpture of the prophet's lamentation over his withered gourd. "My gourd, too, is withered," said Laura. "Do I well to be angry even unto death? Will the giver of all good leave me even here without comfort? Shall I refuse to find pleasure in any duties but such as are of my own selection? Because the gratification of one passion—one misplaced passion,—is refused, has this world no more to offer? this fair world, which its great Creator has stamped with his power, and stored by his bounty, and ennobled by making it the temple of his worshippers, the avenue to heaven! Shall I find no balm in the consolations of friendship, the endearments of parental love—no joy in the sweets of benevolence, the stores of knowledge, the miracles of grace! Oh! may I ever fearlessly confide in the fatherly care, that snatched me from the precipice

when my rash confidence was about to plunge me to my ruin—that opened my eyes on my danger ere retreat was impossible."

The reflections of Laura were disturbed by the noise of some one springing over the fence; and the next moment Hargrave was at her side. Laura uttered neither shriek nor exclamation—but she turned; and, with steps as precipitate as would bear the name of walking, proceeded towards the gate. Hargrave followed her.

"Am I indeed so happy as to find you alone?" said he. Laura replied not by word or look. "Suffer me to detain you for a few moments." Laura rather quickened her pace. "Will you not speak to me Miss Montreville?" said Hargrave, in a tone of tender reproach. Laura continued to advance. "Stay but one moment," said he, in a voice of supplication. Laura laid her hand upon the gate. Hargrave's patience was exhausted. "By heaven you *shall* hear me!" he cried, and, throwing his arm round her, compelled her to be seated on the stone bench at the gate.

Laura coldly withdrew herself. "By what right, Sir," said she, "do you presume to detain me?"

"By the right of wretchedness—of misery not to be endured. Since I last saw you, I have

never known rest or peace. Surely, Laura, you are now sufficiently avenged—surely your stubborn pride may now condescend to hear me."—

"Well, Sir," said Laura, without attempting to depart; "what are your commands?"

"Oh, Laura, I cannot bear your displeasure—it makes me supremely miserable. If you have any pity, grant me your forgiveness."

"If my forgiveness be of any value to you, I give it you, I trust, like a Christian—from the heart. Now, then, suffer me to go."

"What—think you it is the frozen forgiveness of duty that will content me? Torn, as I am, by every passion that can drive man to frenzy, think you that I will accept—that I will endure this heartless, scornful pardon? Laura, you loved me once. I have doated on you—pined for you—and passion—passion only—will I accept, or bear from you."

Laura shrunk trembling from his violence. "Colonel Hargrave," said she, "if you do not restrain this vehemence, I must, I will be gone. I would fain spare you unnecessary pain; but while you thus agitate yourself, my stay is useless to you, and to me most distressing."

"Say, then, that you accept my vows—that, hopeless of happines but with me, you bind your-

self to me alone, and for ever. Speak, heavenly creature, and bless me beyond the fairest dreams of hope."

"Colonel Hargrave," said Laura, "you have my forgiveness. My—what shall I say—my esteem you have cast from you—my best wishes for your happiness shall ever be yours—more I cannot give. In pity to yourself, then—in pity to me—renounce one who can never be yours."

Hargrave's eyes flashed fire, while his countenance faded to ghastly paleness. "Yes;" he exclaimed, "cold, pitiless, insensible woman—yes I renounce you. In the haunts of riot, in the roar of intemperance, will I forget that form, that voice—and, when I am lost to fame, to health, to usefulness—my ruin be on your soul."

"Oh! Hargrave," cried the trembling Laura, "talk not so wildly; Heaven will hear my prayers for you.—Amidst the pursuits of wisdom—amidst the attractions of others, you will forget me."

"Forget you! Never. While I have life, I will follow you—supplicate—persecute you.—Mine you shall be, though infamy and death ensue. Dare not," said he, grasping her arm,—"dare not to seek the protection of another.—

Dare but to give him one smile, and his life shall be the forfeit."

"Alas! Alas!" cried Laura, wringing her hands in anguish, "this is real frenzy. Compose yourself, I implore you—there is no other—there never can be."—

Her tears recalled Hargrave to something like composure. "Dearest Laura," said he, "I wish to soften—I only terrify you. Fear not, beloved of my soul—speak to me without alarm. I will hear you, if it be possible, with calmness—but say not, oh! say not that you reject me!"

Laura averted her face. "Why prolong this distressing interview," said she,—"You have heard my determination. I know that it is right, and I cannot relinquish it."

The triumph of self-conquest gave firmness to her voice; and Hargrave, driven again from composure by her self-command, sprung from her side. "It is well, Madam," he cried; "triumph in the destruction of my peace; but think not I will so tamely resign you. No; by Heaven. I will go this moment to your father—I will tell him my offence; and ask if he thinks it deserves such punishment. Let him take my life—I abhor it."

"Is your promise, then, of such small avail?" said Laura, sternly.

"Shall a promise bind me to a life of wretchedness? Shall I regard the feelings of one who takes an inhuman pleasure in my sufferings?"

At this moment Laura's eyes fell on her father, who was entering the little avenue. Hargrave's glance followed her's, and he prepared to join Captain Montreville. In an agony of terror, Laura grasped his arm. "Spare me, spare me," she said, "and do with me what you will!" Captain Montreville saw that the walk was occupied; he turned from it, and Laura had again time to breathe. "Say, then," said Hargrave, softened by her emotion,—"say that, when years of penitence have expiated my offence, you will yet be mine."

Laura covered her face with her hands. "Let me not hear you—let me not look upon you," said she;—"leave me to think, if it be possible," —and she poured a silent prayer to Heaven for help in this her sorest trial. The effort composed her, and the majesty of virtue gave dignity to her form, and firmness to her voice, while she said,—"My father's life is in the hands of Providence—it will still be so, when I have repeated to you, that I dare not trust to principles such as

yours the guardianship of this the infancy of my being. I dare not incur certain guilt to escape contingent evil. I cannot make you the companion of this uncertain life, while your conduct is such as to make our eternal separation the object of my dreadful hope."

Hargrave had trusted that the tenderness of Laura would seduce, or his ardour overpower her firmness; but he read the expression of her pale determined countenance, and felt assured that she was lost to him for ever. Convinced that all appeal to her feelings would be hopeless, he would deign to make none; but, in a voice made almost inarticulate by the struggle of pride and anguish, he said,—"Miss Montreville, your father's life is safe from me—I will not lift my hand against it. That he should take mine is of small importance, either to you or myself. A violent death," continued he, his pale lip quivering with a smile of bitterness,—"may perhaps procure me your tardy pity."

From the storm of passion, Laura had shrunk with terror and dismay; but the voice of suppressed anguish struck her to the soul. "Oh! Hargrave," she cried, with tears no longer to be restrained, "you have my tenderest pity—would to

Heaven that the purity of your future life would restore me to the happiness of esteeming you!"

Laura's tenderness revived, in a moment, the hopes of Hargrave. "Angel of sweetness," he exclaimed, "mould me to your will—say that, when purified by years of repentance, you will again bless me with your love; and no exertion will be too severe—no virtue too arduous."

"No, this I dare not promise; let a higher motive influence you; for it is not merely the conduct—it is the heart that must have changed, ere I durst expose my feeble virtue to the trial of your example—your authority; ere I durst make it my duty to shut my eyes against your faults, or to see them with the indulgence of love."

"Dearest Laura, one word from you will lure me back to the path of virtue—will you wilfully destroy even the wish to return?—If for a year—for two years—my conduct should bear the strictest scrutiny—will you not accept this as a proof that my heart is changed—changed in every thing but its love for you? Will you not then receive me?"

Laura had resisted entreaty—had withstood alarm—had conquered strong affection; but the hope of rousing Hargrave to the views, the pur-

suits, the habits of a Christian, betrayed her caution, and gladdened her heart to rapture. "If for two years," said she, her youthful countenance brightening with delight, "your conduct be such as you describe—if it will bear the inspection of the wise, of the sober-minded; of the pious,—as my father's friend, as my own friend, will I welcome you."

Thus suddenly raised from despair, Hargrave seemed at the summit of felicity. Once admitted as her "father's friend, as her own," he was secure of the accomplishment of his wishes. The time that must first elapse, appeared to him but a moment; and the labours of duty required of him seemed a smiling dream. Love and joy animated every feature of his fine countenance; he threw himself at the feet of Laura, and rapturously blessed her for her condescension. His ecstasies first made her sensible of the extent of her concession; and she feared that she had gone too far. But with her, a promise, however inadvertent, was a sacred thing, which she would neither qualify nor retract. She contented herself, therefore, with merely repeating the terms of it, emphatically guarding the conditions. Desirous now to have leisure for reflection, she reminded him that the

lateness of the hour made it fit that he should depart; and, inwardly persuaded that she would not long obdurately refuse him another interview, he obeyed without much opposition.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASVATI MAHAL

CHAP. VI.

The lovers were no sooner separated, than Hargrave began to repent that he had not more distinctly ascertained the kind and manner of the intercourse which he was to hold with his mistress during the term of his probation ; and though he had little fear that she would be very rigid, he considered this as a point of such importance, that he resolved not to quit Glenalbert without having the matter settled to his satisfaction. For this reason he condescended to accept the accommodations of the little straw-roofed cottage, by courtesy called the Inn, where he had already left his horses. Thither he retired accordingly, not without some national misgivings of mind on the subject of Scotish nastiness and its consequences. His apartment, however, though small, was decent, his bed was clean, his sleep refreshing, and his dreams pleasant; nor was it till a late hour the following morning, that he rose to the homely

comfort, and clumsy abundance of a Highland breakfast.

As soon as he had finished his repast, he walked towards Montreville's cottage, ostensibly to pay his respects to the Captain, but, in reality, with the hope of obtaining a private interview with Laura. He entered the garden, where he expected to find Captain Montreville. It was empty. He approached the house. The shutters were barred. He knocked at the door, which was opened by the old woman; and, on inquiring for Captain Montreville, he was answered, "Wow, Sir, him an' Miss Laura's awa' at six o'clock this morning." "Away," repeated the Colonel,—"where are they gone?" "To London, Sir; and I'm sure a lanely time we'll hae till they come hame again." "What stay do they intend making?" "Heth, Sir, I dare say that's what they dinna ken themsels." "What is their address?" inquired the Colonel. "What's your will, Sir?" "Where are they to be found?" "Am'n I tellan you they're in London, Sir. I'm sure ye ken whar that is?" "But how are you to send their letters?" "Wow! they never got mony letters but frae England; and now 'at they're in London, ye ken the folk may gie them into their ain hand." "But suppose you should have occasion to write to them

yourself?" said Hargrave, whose small stock of patience wore fast to a close. "Hech, Sir, sorrow a scrape can I write. They learn a' thae newfangled things now; but, trouth, i' my young days, we were na' sae upsettan." Hargrave was in no humour to canvass the merits of the different modes of education; and muttering an ejaculation, in which the word *devil* was distinctly audible, he turned away.

Vexed and disappointed, he wandered down the churchyard-lane, and reached the spot where he had last seen Laura. He threw himself on the seat which had supported her graceful form—called to mind her consummate loveliness—her ill-repressed tenderness—and most cordially consigned himself to Satan for neglecting to wring from her some further concessions. She was now removed from the solitude where he had reigned without a rival. Her's would be the gaze of every eye—her's the command of every heart. "She may soon choose among numbers," cried he,—"she will meet with people of her own humour, and some canting hypocritical scoundrel will drive me completely from her mind."

By the time he had uttered this prediction, and bit his lip half through—he was some steps on his way to order his horses, that he might pursue

his fair fugitive, in the hope of extorting from her some less equivocal kind of promise. Fortunately for his reputation for sanity, however, he recollected, before he began his pursuit, that, ere he could overtake her, Laura must have reached Edinburgh, where, without direction, it might be difficult to discover her abode. In this dilemma, he was again obliged to have recourse to the old woman at the cottage; but she could give him no information. She neither knew how long Captain Montreville purposed remaining in Edinburgh, nor in what part of the town he intended to reside.

Thus baffled in his inquiries, Hargrave was convinced that his pursuit must be ineffectual; and, in no very placid frame of mind, he changed his destination from Edinburgh to his quarters. He arrived there in time for a late dinner, but his wine was insipid, his companions tiresome; and he retired early, that, early next morning, he might set out on a visit to Mrs Douglas, from whom he purposed to learn Captain Montreville's address.

On comparing the suppressed melancholy of Laura, her embarrassment at the mention of Hargrave, and her inadvertent disclosure, with her father's detail of her rejection of the insinuating

young soldier, a suspicion not very remote from truth, had entered the mind of Mrs Douglas. She imagined that Captain Montreville had in some way been deceived as to the kind of proposals made to his daughter; and that Laura had rejected no offers but such as it would have been infamy to accept. Under this conviction, it is not surprising that her reception of the Colonel was far from being cordial; nor that, guessing his correspondence to be rather intended for the young lady than for the old gentleman, she chose to afford no facility to an intercourse which she considered as both dangerous and degrading. To Hargrave's questions, therefore, she answered, that until she should hear from London, she was ignorant of Captain Montreville's address; and that the time of his return was utterly unknown to her. When the Colonel, with the same intention, soon after repeated his visit, she quietly, but steadily, evaded all his inquiries, equally unmoved by his entreaties, and by the paroxysms of impatience with which he endured his disappointment.

Hargrave was the only child of a widow—an easy, indolent, good sort of a woman, who would gladly have seen him become every thing that man ought to be, provided she could have accomplish-

ed this laudable desire without recourse to such harsh instruments as contradiction and restraint. But of these she disliked the use, as much as her son did the endurance; and thus the young gentleman was educated, or rather grew up, without the slightest acquaintance with either. Of consequence, his naturally warm temper became violent, and his constitutionally strong passions ungovernable.

Hargrave was the undoubted heir of a title, and of a fine estate. Of money he had never felt the want, and did not know the value; he was, therefore, so far as money was concerned, generous even to profusion. His abilities were naturally of the highest order. To force him to the improvement of them, was an effort above the power of Mrs Hargrave; but, fortunately for him, ere his habits of mental inaction were irremediable, a tedious illness confined him to recreations in which mind had some share, however small. During the interdiction of bats and balls, he, by accident, stumbled on a volume of Peregrine Pickle, which he devoured with great eagerness; and his mother, delighted with what she was pleased to call a *turn for reading*, took care that his new appetite should not, any more than the old ones, pine for want of gratification. To direct it to food

wholesome and invigorating, would have required unremitting, though gentle labour: and to labour of all kinds Mrs Hargrave had a practical antipathy. But it was very easy to supply the young man with romances, poetry, and plays; and it was pleasing to mistake their intoxicating effect for the bursts of mental vigour. A taste for works of fiction, once firmly established, never afterwards yielded to the attractions of sober truth; and, though his knowledge of history was neither accurate nor extensive, Hargrave could boast an intimate acquaintance with all the plays, with almost all the poetry, and, as far as it is attainable by human diligence, with all the myriads of romances in his mother tongue. He had chosen of his own free-will to study the art of playing on the flute—the violin requiring more patience than he had to bestow; and emulation, which failed to incite him to more useful pursuits, induced him to try whether he could not draw as well as his play-fellow, De Courcy.

At the age of seventeen he had entered the army. As he was of good family, of an elegant figure, and furnished by nature with one of the finest countenances she ever formed, his company was courted in the highest circles, and to the ladies he was particularly acceptable. Among

such associates, his manners acquired a high polish; and he improved in what is called knowledge of the world; that is, a facility of discovering, and dexterity in managing the weaknesses of others. One year—one tedious year, his regiment had been quartered in the neighbourhood of the retirement where the aforesaid De Courcy was improving his "few paternal acres;" and, partly by his persuasion and example, partly from having little else to do, partly because it was the fashionable science of the day, Hargrave had prosecuted the study of chemistry.

Thus have we detailed, and in some measure accounted for, the whole of Colonel Hargrave's accomplishments, excepting only, perhaps, the one in which he most excelled—he danced inimitably. For the rest, he had what is called a good heart; that is, he disliked to witness or inflict pain, except from some incitement stronger than advantage to the sufferer. His fine eyes had been seen to fill with tears at a tale of *elegant* distress: he could even compassionate the more vulgar sorrows of cold and hunger to the extent of relieving them, provided always that the relief cost nothing but money. Some casual instances of his feeling, and of his charity, had fallen under the observation of Laura; and upon these, upon the

fascination of his manners, and the expression of his countenance, her fervid imagination had grafted every virtue which can exalt or adorn humanity. Gentle reader, excuse the delusion. Laura was only seventeen—Hargrave was the first handsome man of fashion she had ever known, the first who had ever poured into her ear the soothing voice of love.

Unprepared to find, in an obscure village in Scotland, the most perfect model of dignified loveliness, Hargrave became the sudden captive of her charms; and her manner, so void of all design,—the energy,—the sometimes wild poetic grace of her language—the shrewdness with which she detected, and the simplicity with which she unveiled, the latent motives of action, whether in herself or in others, struck him with all the force of contrast, as he compared them with the moulded artificial standard of the day. His interest in her was the strongest he had ever felt, even before it was heightened by a reserve that came too late to repress or conceal the tenderness with which she repaid his passion.

Yet Hargrave was not less insensible to the real charms of Laura's mind, than she was unconscious of the defects in his.

Her benevolence pleased him; for bright eyes

look brighter through tears of sympathy, and no smile is so lovely as that which shines on the joys of others. Her modesty charmed him; for every voluptuary can tell what allurements blushes add to beauty. But of her self-denial and humility he made no account. Her piety, never obtruded on his notice, had at first escaped his observation altogether; and, now that it thwarted his favourite pursuit, he considered it merely as a troublesome prejudice. Of all her valuable qualities, her unfailing sweetness of temper was perhaps the only one which he valued for its own sake. But her person he idolized. To obtain her no exertion would have appeared too formidable; and, remembering the conditions of their future reconciliation, he began, for the first time in his life, to consider his conduct with a view to its moral fitness.

This he found a subject of inextricable difficulty. He was ignorant of the standard by which Laura would judge him. He was willing to believe that, if she were left to herself, it would not be severe; but the words of her promise seemed to imply, that his conduct was to be subjected to the scrutiny of less partial censors, and he felt some anxiety to know who were to be his "wise," "sober-minded," "pious" inspectors. He did not

game, his expences did not much exceed his income, therefore he could imagine no change in his deportment necessary to conciliate the "wise." Though under the name of sociality, he indulged freely in wine, he seldom exceeded to intoxication. Here again reform seemed needless. But, that he might give no offence to the "sober-minded," he intended to conduct his gallantries with great discretion; and magnanimously resolved to abstain from the molestation of innocent country-girls and decent maid-servants. Finally, to secure the favour of the "pious," he forthwith made a purchase of Blair's sermons, and resolved to be seen in church once at least every Sunday.

It might be supposed, that when the scale of duty which we trace is low, we should be the more likely to reach the little eminence at which we aspire; but experience shows us, that they who poorly circumscribe the Christian race, stop as much short of their humble design, as does he of his nobler purpose, whose glorious goal is perfection. The sequel will show the attainments of Colonel Hargrave in the ways of virtue. In the meantime his magnet of attraction to Perthshire was gone; he soon began to grow weary of the feeling of restraint, occasioned by supposing him-

self the subject of a system of *espionage*; and to kill the time, and relieve himself from his imaginary shackles, he sought the assistance of the Edinburgh races; determined, that if Laura prolonged her stay in London, he would obtain leave of absence, and seek her there.

CHAP. VII.

The grey lights of morning shone mild on Glen-albert, as the carriage, which was conveying Laura to scenes unknown, wound slowly up the hill. With watery eyes she looked back on the quiet beauties of her native valley. She listened to the dashing of its streams, till the murmur died on her ear. Her lowly home soon glided behind the woods; but its early smoke rose peaceful from amidst its sheltering oaks, till it blended with the mists of the morning; and Laura gazed on it as on the parting steps of a friend. "Oh, vales!" she exclaimed, "where my childhood sported—mountains that have echoed to my songs of praise, amidst your shades may my age find shelter—may your wild-flowers bloom on my grave!"—Captain Montreville pressed the fair enthusiast to his breast and smiled. It was a smile of pity—for Montreville's days of enthusiasm were past. It was a smile of pleasure—for we love to look

upon the transcript of our early feelings. But whatever it expressed, it was discord with the tone of Laura's mind. It struck cold on her glowing heart; and she carefully avoided uttering a word that might call forth such another, till, bright gleaming in the setting sun, she first beheld romantic Edinburgh. "Is it not glorious!" she cried, tears of wonder and delight glittering in her eyes; and she longed for its re-appearance, when the descent of the little eminence which had favoured their view, excluded the city from their sight.

As the travellers approached the town, Laura, whose attention was rivetted by the castle and its rocks, now frowning majestic in the shades of twilight, and by the antique piles that seemed the work of giants, scarcely bestowed a glance on the splendid line of modern buildings along which she was passing; and she was sorry when the carriage turned from the objects of her admiration towards the hotel where Captain Montreville intended to lodge.

Next morning, Laura, eager to renew the pleasure of the evening, proposed a walk; not without some dread of encountering the crowd which she expected to find in such a city. At the season of the year, however, when Laura reached Edin-

burgh, she had little cause for apprehension. The noble street through which she passed had the appearance of being depopulated by pestilence. The houses were uninhabited, the window-shutters were closed, and the grass grew from the crevices of the pavement. The few well-dressed people whom she saw, stared upon her with such oppressive curiosity, as gave the uninitiated Laura a serious uneasiness. At first she thought that some peculiarity in her dress occasioned this embarrassing scrutiny. But her dress was simple mourning, and its form the least conspicuous possible. She next imagined, that to her rather unusual stature she owed this unenviable notice; and, with a little displeasure, she remarked to her father, that it argued a strange want of delicacy to appear to notice the peculiarities of any one's figure; and that, in this respect, the upper ranks seemed more destitute of politeness than their inferiors. Captain Montreville answered, with a smile, that he did not think it was her height which drew such attention. "Well," said she, with great simplicity, "I must endeavour to find food for my vanity in this notice, though it is rather against my doing so, that the women stare more tremendously than the gentlemen."

As they passed the magnificent shops, the win-

dows, gay with every variety of colour, constantly attracted Laura's inexperienced eye; and she asked Montreville to accompany her into one where she wished to purchase some necessary trifle. The shopman observing her attention fixed on a box of artificial flowers, spread them before her; and tried to invite her to purchase, by extolling the cheapness and beauty of his goods. "Here is a charming sprig of myrtle, ma'am; and here is a geranium-wreath, the most becoming thing for the hair—only seven shillings each, ma'am." Laura owned the flowers were beautiful. "But I fear," said she, looking compassionately at the man, "you will never be able to sell them all. There are so few people who would give seven shillings for what is of no use whatever." "I am really sorry for that poor young man," said she to her father, when they left the shop. "Tall, robust, in the very flower of his age, how he must feel humbled by being obliged to attend to such trumpery?" "Why is your pity confined to him?" said Montreville. "There were several others in the same situation." "Oh! but they were children, and may do something better by and by. But the tall one, I suppose, is the son of some weak mother, who fears to trust him to fight his country's battles. It is hard that she

should have power to compel him to such degradation; I really felt for him when he twirled those flowers between his finger and thumb, and looked so much in earnest about nothing."

The next thing which drew Laura's attention, was a stay-maker's sign. "Do the gentlemen here wear corsets?" said she to Montreville. "Not many of them, I believe," said Montreville. "What makes you inquire?" "Because there is a *man* opposite who makes corsets. It cannot surely be for women."

Captain Montreville had only one female acquaintance in Edinburgh, a lady of some fashion, and hearing that she was come to town to remain till after the races, he that forenoon carried Laura to wait upon her. The lady received them most graciously, inquired how long they intended to be in Edinburgh; and on being answered that they were to leave it in two days, overwhelmed them with regrets, that the shortness of their stay precluded her from the pleasure of their company for a longer visit. Laura regretted it too; but utterly ignorant of the time which must elapse between a fashionable invitation and the consequent visit, she could not help wondering whether the lady was really engaged for each of the four daily meals of two succeeding days.

These days Captain Montreville and his daughter passed in examining this picturesque city—its public libraries, its antique castle, its forsaken palace, and its splendid scenery. But nothing in its singular environs more charmed the eye of Laura than one deserted walk, where, though the noise of multitudes stole softened on the ear, scarcely a trace of human existence was visible, except the ruin of a little chapel which peeped fancifully from the ledge of a rock, and reminded her of the antick gambols of the red-deer on her native hills, when, from the brink of the precipice, they looked fearless into the dell below.

From this walk, Captain Montreville conducted his daughter to the top of the fantastic mountain which adorns the immediate neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and triumphantly demanded whether she had ever seen such a prospect? But Laura was by no means disposed to let Perthshire yield the palm to Lowland scenery. Here indeed, the prospect was varied and extensive, but the objects were too various, too distant, too gay—they glared on the eye—the interest was lost. The serpentine corn-ridges, offensive to agricultural skill; the school, with its well frequented Gean-tree; the bright green clover fields, seen at intervals through the oak coppice; the church, half hid by

its venerable ash trees; the feathery birch, trembling in the breath of evening; the smoking hamlet, its soft colours blending with those of the rocks that sheltered it; the rill, dashing with fairy anger in the channel which its winter fury had furrowed—these were the simple objects which had charms for Laura, not to be rivalled by neat enclosures and whitened villas. Yet the scenes before her were delightful, and had not Captain Montreville's appeal recalled the comparison, she would, in the pleasure which they excited, have forgotten the less splendid beauties of Glenalbert.

Montreville pointed out the road which led to England. Laura sent a longing look towards it, as it wound amid woods and villages and gentle swells, and was lost to the eye in a country which smiled rich and inviting from afar. She turned her eyes where the Forth is lost in the boundless ocean, and sighed as she thought of the perils and hardships of them who "go down to the sea in ships." Montreville, unwilling to subject her to the inconveniencies of a voyage, had proposed to continue his journey by land, and Laura herself could not think without reluctance of tempting the faithless deep. The scenery, too, which a journey promised to present, glowed in her fervid

imagination with more than nature's beauty. Yet feeling the necessity of rigid economy, and determined not to permit her too indulgent parent to consult her accommodation at the expence of his prudence, it was she who persuaded Montreville to prefer a passage by sea, as the mode of conveyance best suited to his finances.

The next day our travellers embarked for London. The weather was fine, and Laura remained all day upon deck, amused with the novelty of her situation. Till she left her native solitude, she had never even seen the sea, except, when from a mountain top, it seemed far off to mingle with the sky; and to her, the majestic Forth, as it widened into an estuary, seemed itself a " world of waters." But when on one side the land receded from the view, when the great deep lay before her, Laura looked upon it for a moment, and shuddering, turned away. " It is too mournful," said she to her father—" Were there but one spot, however small, however dimly descried, which fancy might people with beings like ourselves, I could look with pleasure on the gulf between—but here there is no resting-place. Thus dismal, thus overpowering, methinks eternity would have appeared, had not a haven of rest been made known to us." Compared with the bound-

less expanse of waters the little bark in which she was floating seemed "diminished to a point;" and Laura raising her eyes to the stars, that were beginning to glimmer through the twilight, thought that such a speck was the wide world itself, amid the immeasurable space in which it rolled. This was Laura's hour of prayer, and far less inviting circumstances can recal us to the acts of a settled habit.

Five days they glided smoothly along the coast, On the morning of the sixth, they entered the river, and the same evening reached London. Laura listened with something like dismay, to the mingled discord which now burst upon her ear. The thundering of loaded carriages, the wild cries of the sailors, the strange dialect, the ferocious oaths of the populace, seemed but parts of the deafening tumult. When they were seated in the coach which was to convey them from the quay, Laura begged her father to prevail on the driver to wait till the unusual concourse of carts and sledges should pass, and heard with astonishment that the delay would be vain. At last they arrived at the inn where Captain Montreville intended to remain till he could find lodgings; and, to Laura's great surprise, they completed their journey without being jostled by any carriages, or

overturned by any waggoner—for ought she knew, without running over any children.

Being shewn into a front parlour, Laura seated herself at a window, to contemplate the busy multitudes that thronged the streets; and she could not help contrasting their number and appearance with those of the inhabitants of Edinburgh. There the loitering step, the gay attire, the vacant look, or the inquisitive glance, told that mere amusement was the object of their walk, if indeed it had an object. Here, every face was full of business—none stared, none sauntered, or had indeed the power to saunter, the double tide carrying them resistlessly along in one direction or the other. Among all the varieties of feature that passed before her, Laura saw not one familiar countenance; and she involuntarily pressed closer to her father, while she thought, that among these myriads she should, but for him, be alone.

Captain Montreville easily found an abode suited to his humble circumstances; and, the day after his arrival, he removed with his daughter to the second floor above a shop in Holborn. The landlady was a widow, a decent orderly-looking person; the apartments, though far from elegant, were clean and commodious. They consisted of

a parlour, two bedchambers, and a small room, or rather closet, which Laura immediately appropriated as her painting-room. Here she found amusement in arranging the materials of her art, while Captain Montreville walked to the west end of the town, to confer with his agent on the unfortunate cause of his visit to London. He was absent for some hours; and Laura, utterly ignorant of the length of his walk, and of its difficulties to one who had not seen the metropolis for twenty years, began to be uneasy at his stay. He returned at last, fatigued and dispirited, without having seen Mr Baynard, who was indisposed, and could not admit him. After a silent dinner, he threw himself upon a sofa, and dismissed his daughter, saying that he felt inclined to sleep.

Laura took this opportunity to write to Mrs Douglas a particular account of her travels. She mentioned with affectionate interest some of her few acquaintances at Glenalbert, and inquired for all the individuals of Mrs Douglas's family; but the name of Hargrave did not once occur in her letter, though nothing could exceed her curiosity to know how the Colonel had borne her departure, of which, afraid of his vehemence, she

had, at their last interview, purposely avoided to inform him.

Having finished her letter, Laura, that she might not appear to repress civility, availed herself of her landlady's invitation to "come now and then," as she expressed it, "to have a chat;" and descended to the parlour below. On perceiving that Mrs Dawkins was busily arranging the tea-equipage, with an air that showed she expected company, Laura would have retreated, but her hostess would not suffer her to go. "No, no, Miss," said she, "I expect nobody but my daughter Kate, as is married to Mr Jones the haberdasher; and you mustn't go, for she can tell you all about Scotland; and it is but natural to think that you'd like to hear about your own country, now when you're in a foreign land, as a body may say."

The good woman had judged well in the bribe she offered to her guest, who immediately consented to join her party; and who, perceiving that Mrs Dawkins was industriously spreading innumerable slices of bread and butter, courteously offered to share her toils. Mrs Dawkins thanked her, and accepted her services, adding, "indeed it's very hard as I should have all them there things to do myself, when I have a grown up

daughter in the house. But, poor thing, it an't her fault after all, for she never was larnt to do nothing of use."

"That was very unfortunate," said Laura.

"Yes, but it might'nt have been so misfortunate neither, only, you see, I'll tell you how it was. My sister, Mrs Smith, had a matter of L. 10,000 left her by her husband, and so she took a fancy when July was born as she'd have her called a grand name; and I'm sure an unlucky name it was for her; for many a fine freak it has put into her head. Well, and so as I was saying, she took July home to herself, and had her larnt to paint, and to make fillagree, and play on the piano, and what not; and to be sure we thought she would never do no less than provide for her. But what do you think, why, two years ago, she ran away with a young ensign, as had nothing in the varsal world but his pay; and so July came home just as she went; and what was worst of all, she could'nt do no more in the shop nor the day she was born."

"That was hard, indeed," said Laura.

"Wasn't it now,—but one comfort was, I had Kate brought up in another guess-way; for I larnt her plain work and writing, and how to cast accounts; and never let her touch a book, except

the prayer-book a-Sundays; and see what's the upshot on't. Why, though July's all to nothing the prettiest, nobody has never made an offer for she, and Kate's got married to a warm man as any in his line hereabouts, and a man as has a house not ten doors off; and besides, as snug a box in the country as ever you seed,—so convenient you've no idear. Why, I dare say, there's a matter of ten stage-coaches pass by the door every day."

To all this family history, Laura listened with great patience, wondering, however, what could induce the narrator to take so much trouble for the information of a stranger.

The conversation, if it deserves the name, was now interrupted by the entrance of a young woman, whom Mrs Dawkins introduced as her daughter July. Her figure was short, inclining to embonpoint—her face, though rather pretty, round and rosy,—and her whole appearance seemed the antipodes of sentiment. She had, however, a book in her hand, on which, after exchanging compliments with Laura, she cast a languishing look, and said, "I have been paying a watery tribute to the sorrows of my fair namesake." Then pointing out the title-page to Lau-

ra, she added, " You, I suppose, have often done so."

It was the tragedy of THE MINISTER, and Laura, reading the name aloud, said, she was not acquainted with it.

" Oh," cried Mrs Dawkins, " that's the young woman as swears so horribly. No, I dares to say, Miss Montreville never read no such thing. If it an't a shame to be seen in a Christian woman hands, it is. And if she would read it by herself, it would be nothing ; but there she goes ranting about the house like an actress, cursing all aloud, worser nor the drunken apple-woman at the corner of the street."

" Pray Mamma, forbear," said Miss Julia Dawkins, in a plaintive tone ; " it wounds my feelings to hear you. I am sure, if Miss Montreville would read this play, she would own that the expressions which you austerely denominate curses, give irresistible energy to the language."

" This kind of energy," said Laura, with a simile, " has at least the merit of being very generally attainable." This remark was not in Miss Julia's line. She had, therefore, recourse to her book, and with great variety of grimace, read aloud one of Casimir's impassioned, or, as Laura thought, frantic speeches. The curious

contrast of the reader's manner with her appearance, of the affected sentimentality of her air with the robust vulgarity of her figure, struck Laura as so irresistibly ludicrous, that though, of all young ladies, she was the least addicted to tittering, her politeness would have been fairly defeated in the struggle, had it not been reinforced by the entrance of Mr and Mrs Jones. The former was a little man, in a snuff-coloured coat, and a brown wig, who seemed to be about fifty,—the latter was a good-humoured common-place looking woman, of about half that age. Laura was pleased with the cordiality with which Mr Jones shook his mother-in-law by the hand, saying, "Well, Mother, I's brought you Kate pure and hearty again, and the little fellow is fine and well, tho'f he be too young to come a-wisiting."

As soon as the commotion occasioned by the entrance was over, and Laura formally made acquainted with the lady, Mrs Dawkins began, "I hopes, Kate, you ha'nt forgot how to tell about your jaunt to Scotland; for this here young lady staid tea just o' purpose to hear it."

"Oh, that I ha'nt," said Mrs Jones, "I'm sure I shall remember it the longest day I have to live." "Pray Miss," added she, turning to Laura, "was you ever in Glasgow?"

"Never," said Laura; "I have heard that it is a fine city."

"Ay, but I've been there first and last eleven days; and I can say for it, it is really a handsome town, and a mort of good white-stone houses in it. For you see, when Mr Jones married me, he had not been altogether satisfied with his rider, and he thoft as he'd go down to Glasgow himself and do business; and that he'd make it do for his wedding jaunt, and that would be killing two dogs with one stone."

"That was certainly an excellent plan," said Laura.

"Well," continued Mrs Jones, "when we'd been about a week in Glasgow, we were had to dine one day with Mr Mactavish, as supplies Mr Jones with ginghams; and he talked about some grand house of one of your Scotch dukes, and said as how we must'nt go home without seeing it. So we thought since we had come so far, we might as well see what was to be seen."

"Certainly," said Laura, at the pause which was made to take breath, and receive approbation.

"Well, we went down along the river, which, to say truth, is very pretty, thof it be not turfed, nor kept neat round the edges, to a place they

call Dunbarton; where there is a rock, for all the world like an ill-made sugar loaf, with a slice out o' the middle on't; and they told us there was a castle on it,—but such a castle!"

"Pray, sister," said Miss Julia, "have you an accurate idea of what constitutes a castle? of the keeps, the turrets, the winding-staircases, and the portcullis?"

"Bless you, my dear," returned the traveller, "ha'nt I seen Windsor Castle, and t'other's no more like it—no more than nothing at all. Howsoever, we slept that night at a very decent sort of an inn; and Mr Jones thought as we were so comfortable, we had best come back to sleep. So as the duke's house was but thirty miles off, we thought if we set off soon in the morning, we might get back at night. So off we set, and went two stages to breakfast, at a place with one of their outlandish names; and to be sartin, when we got there, we were as hungry as hounds. Well, we called for hot rolls; and, do but think, there wasn't no such thing to be had for love or money."

Mrs Jones paused to give Laura time for the expression of her pity; but she remained silent, and Mrs Jones resumed: "Well, they brought us a loaf as old as St Paul's, and some good

enough butter; so thinks I, I'll make us some good warm toast; for I loves to make the best of a bad bargain. So I bid the waiter bring us the toast-stool; but if you had seen how he stared,—why, the poor fellor had never heard of no such thing in his life. Then they shewed us a huge mountain, as black as a soot-bag, just opposite the window, and said as we must go up there; but, thinks I, catch us at that; for if we be so bad off here for breakfast, what shall we be there for dinner. So my husband and I were of a mind upon it, to get back to Glasgow as fast as we could; for, though to be sure it cost us a power of money coming down, yet, thinks we, the first loss is the best."

"What would I have given," cried Miss Julia, turning up the whites of her eyes, "to have been permitted to mingle my sighs with the mountain-breezes!" Mrs Jones was accustomed to her sister's nonsense, and she only shrugged her shoulders. But Mrs Dawkins, provoked that her daughter should be so much more than usually ridiculous before a stranger, said, "Why, child, how can you be so silly,—what in the world should you do sighing o' top of a Scotch hill? I dares to say, if you were there you might sigh long enough before you'd find such a comfortable

cup of tea, as what you have in your hand." Miss Julia disdained reply: but turning to our heroine, she addressed her in a tone so amusingly sentimental, that Laura feared to listen to the purport of her speech, lest the manner and the matter united should prove too much for her gravity; and rising, she apologized for retiring, by saying, that she heard her father stir, and that she must attend him.

When two people of very different ages meet tête-à-tête in a room, where they are not thoroughly domesticated,—where there are no books, no musical instruments, nor even that great bond of sociality, a fire,—it requires no common invention and vivacity to pass an evening with tolerable cheerfulness. The little appearances of discomfort, however, which imperceptibly lower the spirits of others, had generally an opposite effect upon those of Laura. Attentive to the comfort of every human being who approached her, she was always the first to discover the existence and cause of the "petty miseries of life;"—but, accustomed to consider them merely as calls to exertion, they made not the slightest impression on her spirits or temper. The moment she cast her eyes upon her father, leaning on a table, where stood a pair of candles that but half-lighted the room; and

on the chimney, where faded fennel occupied the place of a fire, she perceived that all her efforts would be necessary to produce any thing like comfort. She began her operations, by enticing her father out of the large vacant room, into the small one, where she intended to work. Here she prepared his coffee, gave him an account of the party below stairs, read to him her letter to Mrs Douglas, and did and said every thing she could imagine to amuse him.

When the efforts to entertain are entirely on one side, it is scarcely in human nature to continue them; and Laura was beginning to feel very blank, when it luckily occurred to her, that she had brought her little chess-board from Glenalbert. Away she flew, and in triumph produced this infallible resort. The match was pretty equal. Captain Montreville had more skill, Laura more resource; and she defended herself long and keenly. At last she was within a move of being check-mated. But the move was hers: and the Captain, in the heat of victory, overlooked a step by which the fortune of the game would have been reversed. Laura saw it, and eagerly extended her hand to the piece; but recollecting that there is something in the pride of man's nature which abhors to be beaten at chess by a lady, she sud-

denly desisted; and, sweeping her lily arm across the board, "Nay, now," she cried, with a look of ineffable good nature, "if you were to complete my defeat after all my hair-breadth 'scapes, you could not be so unreasonable as to expect that I should keep my temper." "And how dare you," said Captain Montreville, in great good humour with his supposed victory, "deprive me at once of the pleasures of novelty and of triumph?" By the help of this auxiliary, the evening passed pleasantly away; and, before another came, Laura had provided for it the cheap luxury of some books from a circulating library.

CHAP. VIII.

FOR the first fortnight after Captain Montreville's arrival in London, almost every forenoon was spent in unavailing attempts to see Mr Baynard, whose illness, at the end of that time, had increased to such a degree, as left no hope that he could soon be in a condition for attending to business. Harassed by suspense, and weary of waiting for an interview which seemed every day more distant, Captain Montreville resolved to stay no longer for his agent's introduction to Mr Warren, but to visit the young heir, and himself explain his errand. Having procured Mr Warren's address from Mr Baynard's servants, he proceeded to Portland Street; and knocking at the door of a handsome house, was there informed that Mr Warren was gone to Brighton, and was not expected to return for three weeks.

Captain Montreville had now no resource but to unfold his demands to Mr Warren in writing,

He did so, stating his claims with all the simple energy of truth; but no answer was returned. He fatigued himself and Laura in vain, with conjecturing the cause of this silence. He feared that, though dictated by scrupulous politeness, his letter might have given offence. He imagined that it might have miscarried, or that Mr Warren might have left Brighton before it reached him. All these conjectures were, however, wide of the truth. The letter had given no offence, for it had never been read. It safely reached the person to whom it was addressed, just as he was adding a finishing touch to the graces of a huge silk handkerchief in which he had enveloped his chin, preparatory to the exhibition of his person, and of an elegant new curricle upon the Steine. A single glance had convinced him that the letter was unworthy to encroach on this momentous concern—he had thrown it aside, intending to read it when he had nothing else to do, and had seen it no more, till on his return to London, he unrolled from it his bottle of esprit de rose, which his valet had wrapped in its folds.

The three wearisome weeks came to an end at last, as well as a fourth, which the attractions of Brighton prevailed on Mr Warren to add to his stay; and Captain Montreville, making another,

almost hopeless, inquiry in Portland Street, was, to his great joy, admitted to the long-desired conference. He found the young man in his night-gown, reclining on a sofa, intently studious of the *Sportsman's Magazine*, while he ever and anon refreshed himself for this his literary toil, by sipping a cup of chocolate. Being courteously invited to partake, the Captain began by apologizing for his intrusion, but pleaded that his business was of such a nature as to require a personal interview. At the mention of business, the smile forsook its prescriptive station on the smooth face of Mr Warren. "Oh, pray pardon me, Sir," said he, "my agent manages all my matters—I never meddle with business—I have really no head for it. Here, Du Moulin, give this gentleman Mr Williams's address."

"Excuse me, Sir," said Captain Montreville, "On this occasion I must entreat that you will so far depart from your rule as to permit me to state my business to you in person."

"I assure you, Sir," said the beau, rising from his luxurious posture, "I know nothing about business—the very name of it is to me the greatest bore in life; it always reminds me of my old dead uncle. The poor man could never talk of any thing but of bank-stock, the price of the best

Archangel tar, and the scarcity of hemp. Often did I wish the hemp had been cheap enough to make him apply a little of it to his own use—but the old cock took wing at last without a halter, he, he, he."

"I shall endeavour to avoid these offensive subjects," said Captain Montreville, smiling. "The affair in which I wish to interest you, is less a case of law than of equity, and therefore I must beg permission to state it to your personal attention, as your agent might not think himself at liberty to do me the justice which I may expect from you."

Mr Warren at this moment recollected an indispensable engagement, and begged that Captain Montreville would do him the favour to call another time—secretly resolving not to admit him. "I shall not detain you two minutes," said the Captain; "I shall in a few words state my request, and leave you to decide upon it when you are more at leisure."

"Well, Sir," replied Mr Warren, with something between a sigh and an ill-suppressed yawn, "if it must be so."—

"About eighteen months ago," resumed the Captain, "my agent, Mr Baynard, paid L.1500 to your late uncle, as the price of an annuity on

my daughter's life. The deed is now found to be informal, and Mr Williams has refused to make any payment. Mr Baynard's indisposition has prevented me from seeing him since my arrival in London; but I have no doubt that he can produce a discharge for the price of the annuity; in which case, I presume you will allow the mistake in the deed to be rectified."

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr Warren, who had transferred his thoughts from the subject of conversation to the comparative merits of nankeen pantaloons and leather-breeches.

"But even if Mr Baynard should have no document to produce," continued Captain Montreville, "may I not hope that you will instruct Mr Williams to examine, whether there are not in Mr Warren's books, traces of the agreement for an annuity of L. 100, in the name of Laura Montreville?" "Sir?" said Warren, whose ear caught the tone of interrogation, though the meaning of the speaker had entirely escaped him. The Captain repeated his request. "Oh, certainly I will," said the young man, who would have promised any thing to get rid of the subject. "I hope the matter will be found to stand as you wish. At all events, such a trifling sum can be of no sort of consequence."

"Pardon me, Sir," said Captain Montreville, warmly, "to me it is of the greatest—should this trifle, as you are pleased to call it, be lost to me, my child must at my death be left to all the horrors, all the temptations of want—temptations aggravated a thousand fold, by beauty and inexperience."

His last words awakened something like interest in the drowsy soul of his hearer, who said, with the returning smile of self-complacency, "Beauty, Sir, did you say? beauty is what I may call my passion—a pretty girl is always sure of my sympathy and good offices. I shall call for Mr Williams this very day."

Captain Montreville bit his lip. "Laura Montreville, thought he, an object of sympathy to such a thing as thou!" He bowed, however, and said, "I hope, Sir, you will find, upon examination, that Miss Montreville's claims rest upon your justice." Then laying his address upon the table, he took his leave, with an air perhaps a little too stately for one who had come to ask a favour.

He returned home, however, much pleased with having at last met with Warren, and with having, as he imagined, put in train the business on account of which he had performed so long a

journey, and suffered so much uneasiness. He found Laura, too, in high spirits. She had just given the finishing touches to a picture on which she had been most busily employed ever since her arrival in London. She had studied the composition, till her head ached with intensity of thought. She had laboured the finishing with care unspeakable; and she now only waited till her work could with safety be moved, to try the success of her project for the attainment of wealth. Of this success she scarcely entertained a doubt. She was sensible, indeed, that the picture had many faults, but not so many as that on which Mrs Douglas's visitor had fixed so high a price. Since painting the latter, she had improved in skill; and never had she bestowed such pains as on her present work. The stranger had said that the Scipio in Mrs Douglas's picture was interesting. The Leonidas in this was much more so—she could not doubt it, for he resembled Hargrave. She had hoped the resemblance would be apparent to no eye but her own. Her father, however, had noticed it, and Laura had tried to alter the head, but the Captain declared she had spoiled it. Laura thought so herself; and, after sketching a hundred regularly handsome counte-

nances, could be satisfied with none which bore not some affinity to her only standard of manly beauty.

To add to the pleasure with which Laura surveyed the completion of her labours, she had that day received a letter from Mrs Douglas, in which mention was made of Hargrave.

In her first letters to Laura, Mrs Douglas had entirely avoided this subject. Almost a month Laura had waited, with sickening impatience, for some hint from which she might gather intelligence of Hargrave's motions—in vain. Her friend had been provokingly determined to believe that the subject was disagreeable to her correspondent. Laura at last ventured to add, to one of her letters, a postscript, in which, without naming the Colonel, she inquired whether the —— regiment was still at Perth. She blushed as she glanced over this postscript. She thought it had an air of contrivance and design. She was half tempted to destroy the letter; but she could not prevail on herself to make a more direct inquiry; and to forbear making any was almost impossible. An answer had this day arrived; and Laura read no part of it with such interest, as that which, with seeming carelessness, informed her that the Colo-

nel had been several times at the parsonage: and that Mrs Douglas understood from report, that he was soon to visit London.

Again and again did Laura read this passage, and ponder every word of it with care. I am playing the fool, said she to herself, and laid the letter aside; took it up again to ascertain some particular expression, again read the paragraph which spoke of Hargrave, and again paused upon his name. She was so employed when her father entered, and she made an instinctive motion to conceal the paper; but the next moment she held it out to him, saying, "This is from Mrs Douglas." "Well, my love," said the Captain, "if there are no secrets in it, read it to me. I delight in Mrs Douglas's simple affectionate style." Laura did as she was desired; but when she reached the sentence which began with the name of Hargrave, she blushed, hesitated for a moment, and then, passing it over, began the next paragraph.

Without both caution and self-command, the most upright woman will be guilty of subterfuges, where love is in question. Men can talk of the object of their affections—they find pleasure in confiding, in describing, in dwelling upon their passion—but the love of women seeks con-

cealment. If she can talk of it, or even of any thing that leads to it, the fever is imaginary, or it is past. " It is very strange," said the Captain, when Laura had concluded, " that Mrs Douglas never mentions Hargrave, when she knows what an interest I take in him." Laura coloured crimson, but remained silent. " What do you think can be her reason?" asked the Captain. This was a question for which Laura could find no evasion short of actual deceit; and, with an effort far more painful than that from which her little artifice had saved her, her lovely face and neck glowing with confusion, she said " She does mention—only I—I. Please to read it yourself;" and she pointed it out to her father, who, prepared by her hesitation to expect something very particular, was surprised to find the passage so entirely unimportant. " Why, Laura," said he, " what was there to prevent you from reading this?" To this question Laura could make no reply; and the Captain, after gazing on her for some moments in vain hope of an explanation, dismissed the subject, saying, with a shrug of his shoulders, " Well, well—women are creatures I don't pretend to understand."

Laura had often and deeply reflected upon the propriety of confiding to her father her engage-

ment with Hargrave. Vague as it was, she thought a parent had an indisputable right to be informed of it. Her promise too had been conditional, and what judge so proper as her father to watch over the fulfilment of its conditions? What judge so proper as her father to examine the character, and to inspect the conduct, of the man who might one day become her husband? But, amidst all the train of delightful visions which this thought conjured up, Laura felt that Hargrave's conduct had been such as she could not endure that her father should remember against his future son. Captain Montreville was now at a distance from Hargrave. Before they could possibly meet, her arguments, or her entreaties, might have so far prevailed over the subsiding passions of her father, as to dissuade him from a fashionable vindication of her honour. But what was to restore her lover to his present rank in the Captain's regard? What would blot from his recollection the insult offered to his child? Without mention of that insult, her tale must be almost unintelligible; and she was concious that, if she entered on the subject at all, her father's tenderness, or his authority, might unlock every secret of her breast. The time when her engagement could produce any con-

sequence was distant. Ere it arrived, something unforeseen might possibly remove her difficulties; or, at the worst, she hoped that, before she permitted her father to weigh the fault of Hargrave, she should be able to balance against it the exemplary propriety of his after conduct.

She was not just satisfied with this reasoning; but weaker considerations can dissuade us from what we are strongly disinclined to do; and to unveiling her own partiality, or the unworthiness of its object, Laura's disinclination was extreme. She determined therefore to put off the evil hour; and withdrew her father's attention from the subject of the letter, by inquiring whether he had seen Warren, and whether he had settled his business satisfactorily? The Captain replied, that though it was not absolutely settled, he hoped it was now in a fair way of being so; and informed her of Warren's promise. "Yet," added he, "any one of a thousand trifles may make such an animal forget or neglect the most important concern." "What sort of man did he seem?" inquired Laura. "Man!" repeated the Captain, contemptuously. "Why, child, he is a creature entirely new to you. He talks like a parrot, looks like a woman, dresses like a monkey, and

smells like a civet-cat. You might have lived at Glenalbert for half a century, without seeing such a creature." "I hope he will visit us," said Laura, "that we may not return home without seeing at least one of the curiosities of London."

CHAP. IX.

The next day, as Captain Montreville sat reading aloud to his daughter, who was busy with her needle, Mr Warren was announced.

Laura, who concluded that he had business with her father, rose to retire; but her visitor intercepting her, took both her hands, saying, "Pray, Ma'am, don't let me frighten you away." With a constitutional dislike to familiarity, Laura coolly disengaged herself, and left the room without uttering a syllable; but not before Warren had seen enough of her to determine, that, if possible, he should see her again. He was struck with her extraordinary beauty, which was heightened by the little hectic his forwardness had called to her cheek; and he prolonged his visit to an unfashionable length, in the hope of her return. He went over all the topics which he judged proper for the ear of a stranger of his own sex;—talked of the weather, the news, the emptiness of

the town, of horses, ladies, cock-fights, and boxing-matches. He informed the Captain, that he had given directions to his agent to examine into the state of the annuity? inquired how long Miss Montreville was to grace London with her presence; and was told that she was to leave it the moment her father could settle the business, on account of which alone he had left Scotland. When it was absolutely necessary to conclude his visit, Mr Warren begged permission to repeat it, that he might acquaint Captain Montreville with the success of his agent; secretly hoping, that Laura would another time be less inaccessible.

Laura meanwhile thought his visit would never have an end. Having wandered into every room to which she had access, and found rest in none of them, she concluded, rather rashly, that she should find more comfort in the one from which his presence excluded her. That disease of the mind in which, by eager anticipation of the future, many are unfitted for present enjoyment, was new to the active spirit of Laura. The happiness of her life, (and spite of the caprices of her mother, it had, upon the whole, been a happy one), had chiefly arisen from a constant succession of regular, but varied pursuits. The methodical

sequence of domestic usefulness, and improving study, and healthful exercise, afforded calm yet immediate enjoyment; and the future pleasure which they promised was of that indefinite and progressive kind which provokes no eager desires, no impatient expectation. Laura, therefore, had scarcely ever known what it was to long for the morrow; but on this day, the morrow was anticipated with wishful solicitude,—a solicitude which banished from her mind even the thoughts of Hargrave. Never did youthful bridegroom look forward to his nuptial hour with more ardour, than did Laura to that which was to begin the realization of her prospects of wealth and independence. The next day was to be devoted to the sale of her picture. Her father was on that day to visit Mr Baynard at Richmond, whither he had been removed for the benefit of a purer air; and she hoped on his return, to surprise her beloved parent with an unlooked-for treasure. She imagined the satisfaction with which she should spread before him her newly acquired riches,—the pleasure with which she would listen to the praises of her diligence;—above all, her fancy dwelt on the delight which she should feel in relieving her father from the pecuniary embarrassment, in which she knew

him to be involved by a residence in London so much longer than he had been prepared to expect.

That she might add to her intended gift the pleasure of surprise, she was resolved not to mention her plan for to-morrow; and with such objects in contemplation, how could she rest,—of what other subject could she speak? She tried to banish it from her mind, that she might not be wholly unentertaining to her father, who, on her account, usually spent his evenings at home. But the task of amusing was so laborious, that she was glad to receive in it even the humble assistance of Miss Julia Dawkins.

This young lady had thought it incumbent on her to assault our heroine with a most violent friendship; a sentiment which often made her sufficiently impertinent, though it was a little kept in check by the calm good sense and natural reserve of Laura. The preposterous affectation of Julia sometimes provoked the smiles, but more frequently the pity of Laura; for her real good nature could find no pleasure in seeing human beings make themselves ridiculous, and she applied to the cure of Miss Dawkins's foibles, the ingenuity which many would have employed to extract amusement from them. She soon

found, however, that she was combating a sort of Hydra, from which, if she succeeded in lopping off one excrescence, another was instantly ready to sprout. Having no character of her own, Julia was always, as nearly as she was able, the heroine whom the last read novel inclined her to personate. But as those who forsake the guidance of nature are in imminent danger of absurdity, her copies were always caricatures. After reading Evelina, she sat with her mouth extended in a perpetual smile, and was so very timid, that she would not for the world have looked at a stranger. When Camilla was the model for the day, she became insufferably rattling, infantine, and thoughtless. After perusing the Gossip's Story, she, in imitation of the rational Louisa, suddenly waxed very wise—spoke in sentences—despised romance—sewed shifts—and read sermons. But, in the midst of this fit, she, in an evil hour, opened a volume of the Novelle Eloise, which had before disturbed many wiser heads. The shifts were left unfinished, the sermons thrown aside, and Miss Julia returned with renewed *impetus* to the sentimental. This afternoon her studies had changed their direction, as Laura instantly guessed by the lively air with which she entered the room, saying that she had

brought her netting, and would sit with her for an hour. " But do, my dear," added she, " first shew me the picture you have been so busy with; Mamma says it is beautiful, for she peeped in at it the other day."

It must be confessed, that Laura had no high opinion of Miss Dawkins's skill in painting; but she remembered Moliere's old woman, and went with great good-will to bring her performance. " Oh charming," exclaimed Miss Julia, when it was placed before her; " the figure of the man is quite delightful; it is the very image of that bewitching creature Tom Jones."

" Tom Jones!" cried Laura, starting back aghast.

" Yes, my dear," continued Julia; " just such must have been the graceful turn of his limbs—just such his hair, his eyes, those lips, that when they touched her hand, put poor Sophia into such a flutter."

The astonishment of Laura now gave way to laughter, while she said, " Really Miss Dawkins you must have a strange idea of Tom Jones, or I a very extraordinary one of Leonidas."

" Leonce, you mean, in Delphine," said Julia; " Oh, he is a delightful creature too."

" Delphine!" repeated Laura, to whom the

name was as new as that of the Spartan was to her companion. "No, I mean this for the Greek general taking his last leave of his wife."

"And I think," said Captain Montreville, approaching the picture, "the suppressed anguish of the matron is admirably expressed, and contrasts well with the scarcely relenting ardour of the hero."

Miss Julia again declared, that the picture was charming, and that Leontine, as she was pleased to call him, was divinely handsome; but having newly replenished her otherwise empty head with Fielding's novel, she could talk of nothing else; and turning to Laura said, "But why were you so offended, that I compared your Leontine to Tom Jones?—Is he not a favourite of yours?"

"Not particularly so," said Laura.

"Oh why not?—I am sure he is a delightful fellow—so generous—so ardent. Come, confess—should you not like of all things to have such a lover?"

"No, indeed," said Laura, with most unusual energy; for her thoughts almost unconsciously turned to one whose character she found no pleasure in associating with that of Fielding's hero.

"And why not?" asked Miss Julia.

"Because," answered Laura, "I could not admire in a lover qualities which would be odious in a husband."

"Oh goodness!" cried Miss Julia, "do you think Tom Jones would make an odious husband?"

"The term is a little strong," replied Laura; "but he certainly would not make a pleasant yoke-fellow. What is your opinion, Sir?" turning to her father.

"I confess," said the Captain, "I should rather have wished him to marry Squire Western's daughter than mine. But still the character is fitted to be popular."

"I think," said Laura, "he is indebted for much of the toleration which he receives, to a comparison with the despicable Blifil."

"Certainly," said Montreville; "and it is unfortunate for the morality of the book, that the reader is inclined to excuse the want of religion in the hero, by seeing its language made ridiculous in Thwackum, and villanous in Blifil. Even the excellent Mr Alworthy excites but feeble interest; and it is not by the character which we respect, but by that in which we are interested, that the moral effect on our minds is produced."

"Oh," said Miss Julia, who very imperfectly

comprehended the Captain's observation, " he might make a charming husband without being religious; and then he is so warm-hearted—so generous."

" I shall not dispute that point with you just now," replied Laura, " though my opinion differs materially from yours; but Tom Jones's warmth of heart and generosity do not appear to me of that kind which qualify a man for adorning domestic life. His seems a constitutional warmth, which in his case, and I believe, in most others, is the concomitant of a warm temper,—a temper as little favourable to gentleness in those who command, as to submission in those who obey. If by generosity you mean the cheerful relinquishing of something which we really value, it is an abuse of the term to apply it to the profusion with which your favourite squanders his money."

" If it is not generous to part with one's money," said Miss Julia, " I am sure I don't know what is."

" The quiet domestic generosity which is of daily use," replied Laura, " is happily not confined to those who have money to bestow;—but may appear in any of a thousand little acts of self-denial."

Julia, whose ideas of generosity, culled from her favourite romances, were on that gigantic kind of scale which makes it unfit for common occasions, and therefore in danger of total extinction, was silent for some moments, and then said, "I am sure you must allow that it was very noble in Jones to resolve to bury in his own miserable bosom his passion for Sophia, after he knew that she felt a mutual flame."

"If I recollect right," said Laura, smiling at the oddity of Julia's phrases, "he broke that resolution; and I fancy the merely *resolving* to do right, is a degree of virtue, to which even the most profligate attain many times in their lives."

Miss Dawkins by this time more than half-suspected her companion of being a Methodist. "You have such strict notions," said she, "that I see Tom Jones would never have done for you."

"No," said Captain Montreville, "Sir Charles Grandison would have suited Laura infinitely better."

"Oh no, papa," said Laura, laughing; "if two such formal personages as Sir Charles and I had met, I am afraid we should never have had the honour of each other's acquaintance."

"Then, of all the gentlemen who are mention-

ed in novels," said Miss Julia, "tell me who is your favourite?—Is it Lord Orville, or Delville, or Valancourt, or Edward, or Mortimer, or Peregine Pickle, or"——and she ran on till she was quite out of breath, repeating what sounded like a page of the catalogue of a circulating library.

"Really," said Laura, when a pause permitted her to speak, "my acquaintance with these accomplished persons is so limited that I can scarcely venture to decide; but, I believe, I prefer the hero of Miss Porter's new publication—Thaddeus of Warsaw. Truly generous, and inflexibly upright, his very tenderness has in it something manly and respectable; and the whole combination has an air of nature which interests one as for a real friend." Miss Dawkins had never read the book, and Laura applied to her father for a confirmation of her opinion. "Yes, my dear," said the Captain, "your favourite has the same resemblance to a human character which the Belvidere Apollo has to a human form. It is so like man that one cannot absolutely call it divine, yet so perfect, that it is difficult to believe it human."

At this moment Miss Julia was seized with an uncontrollable desire to read the book, which,

she declared, she should not sleep till she had done; and she went to dispatch a servant in quest of it.

Laura followed her down stairs, to ask from Mrs Dawkins the address of some picture-dealer, to whom she might dispose of her performance. Mrs Dawkins said she knew of no such person; but directed Laura to a print-shop, the master of which was her acquaintance, where she might get the intelligence she wanted.

On the following morning, as soon as Captain Montreville had set out for Richmond, his daughter, sending for a hackney-coach, departed on the most interesting business she had ever undertaken. Her heart fluttered with expectation—her step was bouyant with hope, and she sprung into the carriage with the lightness of a sylph. Stopping at the shop which her landlady recommended, she was there directed to several of the professional people for whom she was inquiring, and she proceeded to the habitation of the nearest. As she entered the house, Laura changed colour, and her breath came quick. She stopped a moment to recover herself, and then followed her conductor into the presence of the connoisseur. Struck with the sight of so elegant a woman, he rose, bowed very low, and supposing that she came to

make some addition to her cabinet, threw open the door of his picture-room, and obsequiously hoped that she might find something there worthy of her notice. Laura modestly undeceived him, saying, that she had brought in the carriage which waited for her, a picture which she wished to dispose of. This statement instantly put to flight the servility of her hearer; who, with completely recovered consequence, inquired the name of the artist; and being answered, that the picture was not the work of a professional man, wrinkled his nose into an expression of ineffable contempt, and said—" I make it a rule never to buy any of these things—they are generally such vile daubs. However, to oblige so pretty a lady," added he, (softening his contumelious aspect into a leer), " I may look at the thing, and if it be at all tolerable"——" There is no occasion to give you that trouble," said Laura, turning away with an air which again half-convinced the man that she must be a person of consequence. He muttered something of " thinking it no trouble;" to which she gave no attention, but hastened to her carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive to the show-room of an Italian.

Laura did not give him time to fall into the mistake of the other, but instantly opened her bu-

siness; and Mr Sonini was obligingly running himself to lift the picture from the carriage, when it was brought in by Mrs Dawkins's maid, whom Laura had requested to attend her. Having placed the picture, the Italian retreated a few paces to examine the effect, and then said—" Ah! I do see—dis is leetle after de manner of Correggio—very pretty—very pretty, indeed." The hopes of Laura rose high at these encouraging words; but suffered instantaneous depression, when he continued, with a shake of his head, " but 'tis too new—quite moderne—painted in dis contri.—Painter no name—de picture may be all so good as it vil—it never vil sell. Me sorry," added he, reading Laura's look of disappointment, " me sorry displease such bell angela; but cannot buy." " I am sorry for it," said Laura, and, sighing heavily, she courtesied and withdrew.

Her next attempt was upon a little pert-looking man, in a foreign dress, and spectacles. " Hum," said he, " a picture to sell—well, let us see't.—There, that's the light. Hum—a poor thing enough—no keeping—no costûme. Well, Ma'am, what do you please to ask for this?" " I should be glad, Sir, that you would fix a price on it." " Hum—well—let me think—I suppose five guineas will be very fair." At this proposal,

the blood mounted to the cheeks of Laura; and she raised her eyes to examine whether the proposer really had the confidence to look her in the face. But finding his eyes steadily fixed on her, she transported her suspicions from the honesty of the bidder to the merits of her piece, and mildly answering, "I shall not, I believe, be disposed to part with it at that price," she motioned to the servant to carry it back to the coach.

One trial still remained, and Laura ordered her carriage to an obscure street in the city. She was very politely received by Mr Collins,—a young man who had himself been an artist; but whom bad health had obliged to relinquish a profession which he loved. "This piece has certainly great merit," said he, after examining it, "and most gladly would I have made the purchase: but my little room is at present overstocked, and, to own the truth to you, the picture is worth more than my wife and four little ones can afford to venture upon speculation, and such is the purchase of the work, however meritorious, of an unknown artist. But if you were to place it in the Exhibition, I have no doubt that it would speedily find a purchaser." The prospect which the Exhibition held forth, was far too distant to

meet the present exigency; for Laura well knew that her father would find almost immediate occasion for the price of her labours; and with a heavy sigh she returned to her carriage.

What now remained but to return home with the subject of so much fruitless toil. Still, however, she determined to make one effort more, and returned to inquire of the printseller, whether he knew of any other person to whom she could apply? He had before given his whole list, and could make no addition to it. But observing the expression of blank disappointment which overcast her face, he offered, if she would trust him with the picture, to place it where it would be seen by his customers, and expressed a belief that some of them might purchase it. Laura thankfully accepted the offer, and after depositing with him her treasure, which had lost much of its value in her eyes, and naming the price she expected, she returned home; making in her way as many sombrous reflections on the vanity and uncertainty of all sublunary pursuits, as ever were made by any young lady in her eighteenth year.

She sat down in her now solitary parlour—suffered dinner to be placed before her and removed, without knowing of what it consisted; and when the servant who brought it disappeared,

began, like a true heroine, to vent her disappointment in tears. But soon recollecting that though she had no joyful surprise awaiting her father's return, she might yet gladden it with a smiling welcome, she started up from her melancholy posture—bathed her eyes—placed the tea-equipage—ordered the first fire of the season to displace the faded fennel in the chimney—arranged the apartment in the nicest order—and had just given to every thing the greatest possible appearance of comfort, when her father arrived.

She had need, however, of all her firmness, and of all the elation of conscious self-control, to resist the contagious depression of countenance and manner with which Captain Montreville accosted her. He had good reason for his melancholy. Mr Baynard, his early acquaintance, almost the only person known to him in this vast city, had that morning breathed his last. All access to his papers was of course at present impossible; and until a person should be chosen to arrange his affairs, it would be impracticable for Captain Montreville to ascertain whether there existed any voucher for the payment of the price of the annuity. Harassed by his repeated disappointments, and unendowed by nature with the unbending spirit which rises in disaster, he now de-

clared to Laura his resolution to remain in London only till a person was fixed upon for the management of Mr Baynard's affairs—to lay before him the circumstances of his case—and then to return to Scotland, and trust to a correspondence for concluding the business.

At this moment nothing could have been further from Laura's wish than to quit London. She was unwilling to forfeit her remaining hope that her picture might find a purchaser, and a still stronger interest bound her to the place which was so soon to be the residence of Hargrave. But she saw the prudence of her father's determination—she felt the necessity of relinquishing a mode of life so unsuitable to his scanty income, and she cheerfully acquiesced in his proposal of returning home. Still some time must elapse before their departure; and she indulged a hope, that ere that time expired, the produce of her labours might lighten their pecuniary difficulties.

Captain Montreville retired early; and Laura, wearied out with the toils and the disappointments of the day, gladly resigned herself to the peaceful sleep of innocence.

Laura was indebted partly to nature, but more to her own exertions, for that happy elasticity of spirit which easily casts off lighter evil, while it readily

seizes, and fully enjoys, pleasure of moderate intensity, and of frequent attainment. Few of the lesser sorrows of youth can resist the cheering influence of early morn; and the petty miseries which, in the shades of evening, assume portentous size and colouring, diminish wonderfully in the light of the new-risen sun. With recovered spirits, and reviving hopes, Laura awoke to joys which the worldly know not,—the joys of pious gratitude—of devout contemplation—of useful employment; and so far was her persevering spirit from failing under the disappointments of the preceding day, that she determined to begin a new picture the moment she was settled at Glenalbert, to compose it with more care, and finish it with greater accuracy, than the former; and to try its fate at the Exhibition. She did not think the season of her father's depression a fit one for relating her mortifying adventures, and she found means to amuse him with other topics till he left her, with an intention to call in Portland Street.

He had not been long gone, when Mr Warren's curricle stopped at the door, and the young gentleman, on being informed that the Captain was abroad, inquired for Miss Montreville. After paying his compliments like one secure of a good reception, he began—"How could you be so

cruel as to refuse me the pleasure of seeing you the other day—do you know I waited here a devilish long time just on purpose, though I had promised to take the Countess of Bellamer out an airing, and she was off with Jack Villars before I came."

"I am sorry," said Laura, "that I deprived her Ladyship of the pleasure of your company."

"I should not have minded it much, if you had but come at last,—though the Countess is the prettiest creature in London—curse me if she is'nt—the present company always excepted."

"Do you mean the exception for me, or for yourself?" said Laura.

"Oh now, how can you ask such a question?—I am sure you know that you are confoundedly handsome."

Laura gravely surveyed her own face in an opposite looking-glass, and then, with the nonchalance of one who talks of the most indifferent thing in nature, replied,—"Yes, I think my features are uncommonly regular."

Warren was a little embarrassed by so unusual an answer to what he intended for a compliment. "The girl," thought he, "must be quite a fool to own that she thinks herself so handsome."

However, after some consideration, he said,—" It is not so much the features, as a certain *je ne sçai quoi*—a certain charm—one does not know well what to call it, that makes you look so divine."

" I should suppose," said Laura, " from the subject you have chosen to amuse me, that the charm, whatever it is, has no great connection with intellect."

Warren hesitated ; for he began to have some suspicions that she was laughing at him, in spite of the immoveable gravity of her countenance. " It—It isn't—Demme, it isn't so much to amuse you ; but when I see a pretty woman, I never can help telling her of it—curse me if I can."

" And do you often find that your intelligence has the advantage of novelty ?" said Laura ; an arch smile beginning to dimple her cheek.

" No, 'pon honour," replied the beau, " the women are getting so insufferably conceited, they leave one nothing new to tell them."

" But some gentlemen," said Laura, " have the happy talent of saying old things so well, that the want of novelty is not felt." The moment the words had passed her lips, she perceived, by the

gracious smile which they produced, that Mr Warren had applied them to himself; and the thought of being guilty of such egregious flattery, brought the colour to her face. Any explanation, however, would have been actual rudeness; and while the consciousness of her involuntary duplicity kept her silent, her companion enjoyed her confusion; which, together with the compliment, he interpreted in a way most satisfactory to his vanity, and thankfully repaid with a torrent of praises in his very best style.

So little value did Laura affix to his commendations, that she was beginning to find extreme difficulty in suppressing a yawn, when it occurred to her that it might save her father a journey to Portland Street, if she could detain Mr Warren till he arrived. Having made an observation which has been more frequently made than profited by, that most people prefer talking to listening, she engaged her companion in a description of some of the fashionable places of public resort, none of which she had seen; in which he acquitted himself so much to his own satisfaction, that, before they separated, he was convinced that Laura was one of the most penetrating judicious women of his acquaintance; and having before re-

marked, that, with the help of a little rouge, and a fashionable riding-habit, she would look better in a curricle than any woman in London, he resolved, that if it depended on him, her residence in town should not be a short one. In this laudable resolution, he was confirmed by a consideration of the insolence and extravagance of a certain female, to whose place in his establishment he had some vague idea of advancing Miss Montreville, though there was a stateliness about both her and her father, which he suspected might somewhat interfere with his designs in her favour. Soon after the Captain arrived, he took his leave, having no new intelligence to communicate, nor indeed any other purpose in his visit, except that which had been served by his interview with Laura.

As soon as he was gone, Laura went down stairs to beg that Miss Dawkins would accompany her after dinner to the print-shop, to inquire what had been the fate of her picture. More than one person she was told, had admired it, and expressed a desire to become the owner; but the price had been a formidable obstacle, and it remained unsold. She strove to hope that another day would bring better fortune; but another and

another came only to renew her disappointment. Almost every evening did Laura, with Mrs Dawkins or her daughter for an escort, direct her steps to the print-shop, and return from her fruitless walk with fainter and fainter hopes.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SA

CHAP. X.

Montague de Courcy had dined tête-à-tête with an old uncle from whom he had no expectations, and was returning home to sup quietly with his mother and sister, when his progress was arrested by a group occupying the whole breadth of the pavement, and he heard a female voice, which, though unusually musical, had in it less of entreaty than of command, saying, "Pray, Sir, allow us to pass." "Not till I have seen the face that belongs to such a figure," answered one of a party of young men who were rudely obstructing the passage of the lady who had spoken. With this condition, however, she seemed not to intend compliance: for she had doubled her veil, and pertinaciously resisted the attempts of her persecutor to raise it.

De Courcy had a rooted antipathy to all manner of violence and oppression, especially when exercised against the more defenceless part of the

creation; and he no sooner ascertained these circumstances, than, with one thrust of his muscular arm, (which, to say the truth, was more than a match for half a dozen of the puny fry of sloth and intemperance), he opened a passage for the lady and her companion; steadily detained her tormentors till she made good her retreat; and then, leaving the gentlemen to answer, as they best could, to their own interrogatories of "What do you mean?" and, "Who the d—l are you!" he followed the rescued damsel, at whose appearance, considering the place and the hour, he was extremely surprised.

Her height, which certainly rose above the beautiful, perhaps even exceeded the majestic; her figure, though slender, was admirably proportioned, and had all the appropriate roundness of the feminine form; her dress, though simple, and of matronly decency, was not unfashionable; while the dignity of her gait, and the composure of her motion, suited well with the majesty of her stature and mien.

While De Courcy was making these observations, he had offered the lady his arm, which she accepted, and his escort home, which she declined, saying, that she would take refuge in a shop, till a coach could be procured. Nor was he less

attentive to her companion, although the latter was a little, elderly, vulgar-looking woman, imperfections which would have utterly disqualified her for the civility of many a polite gentleman.

This person had no sooner recovered the breath of which her supposed danger, and the speed of her escape from it had deprived her, than she began, with extreme volubility, to comment upon her adventure. "Well," cried she, "if that was not the most forwardest thing ever I seed. I am sure I have comed home afore now of an evening a matter of five hunder times, and never met with no such thing in my life. But its all along of my being so saving of your money; for I might have took a coach as you'd have had me: but its no longer ago nor last week, as I comed from my tea, at that very Mr Wilkins's, later nor this, and nobody so much as spoke to me: but catch me penny wise again. Howsoever, it's partlins your own doings; for if you hadn't staid so long a-looking at the pictures in the shop, we shouldn't have met with them there men. Howsoever, Miss Montreville, you did right enough not to let that there jackanapes see your face, otherwise we mighten't have got off from them fellors to-night."

The curiosity of De Courcy thus directed,

overcame his habitual dislike to staring, and rivetted his eyes on a face, which, once seen, was destined never to be forgotten. Her luxuriant hair, (which De Courcy at first thought black, though he afterwards corrected this opinion), was carelessly divided on a forehead, whose spotless whiteness was varied only by the blue of a vein which shone through the transparent skin. As she raised her mild religious dark-grey eyes, their silken lashes rested on the well-defined but delicate eye-brow; or, when her glance fell before the gaze of admiration, threw a long shade on a cheek of unequalled beauty, both for form and colour. The contour of her features, inclining to the Roman, might perhaps have been called masculine, had it not been softened to the sweetest model of maiden loveliness, by the delicacy of its size and colouring. The glowing scarlet of the lips, formed a contrast with a complexion constitutionally pale, but varying every moment; while round her easily but firmly closing mouth, lurked not a trace of the sensual or the vain, but all was calm benevolence, and saintly purity.

In the contemplation of a countenance, the perfect symmetry of which was its meanest charm, De Courcy, who was a physiognomist, suffered the stream of time, as well as that of Mrs Daw-

kins's eloquence, to flow on without notice, and first became sensible that he had profited by neither, when the shop-boy announced that the coach was at the door. While handing the ladies into the carriage, De Courcy again offered his attendance, which Laura, gracefully thanking him for his attentions, again declined; and they drove off just as he was about to inquire where they chose to be set down.

Now, whether it was that Laura was offended at De Courcy's inspection of her face, or whether she saw any thing disagreeable in his; whether it was that her pride disdained lodgings in Holborn, or that she desired not to be recognized by one who had met with her in such a situation, certain it is, that she chose the moment when that gentleman was placing her voluble companion in the coach, to give the coachman her directions, in sounds which escaped the ears of De Courcy. As he had no means of remedying this misfortune, he walked home, and philosophically endeavoured to forget it in a game at chess with his mother. The fidelity of a historian, however, obliges us to confess, that he this evening played in a manner which would have disgraced a school-boy. After mistaking his antagonist's men for his own, playing into check, throwing away his pieces, and

making false moves, he answered his mother's question of "Montague, what are you doing?" by pushing back his chair, and exclaiming, "Mother, you never beheld such a woman!"

"Woman!" repeated Mrs De Courcy, settling her spectacles, and looking him full in the face. "Woman!" said his sister, laying down Bruyere, "Who is she?"

"I know not," answered De Courcy, "but had Lavater seen her, he could scarcely have believed her human."

"What is her name?"

"The woman who attended her called her Montreville."

"Where did you meet her?"

"In the street."

"In the street!" cried Harriet, laughing, "Oh, Montague, this is not half sentimental enough for you. You should have found her all in a shady bower, playing on a harp which came there nobody knows how; or, all elegant in India muslin, dandling a beggar's brat in a dirty cottage. But let us hear the whole adventure."

"I have already told you all I know," answered De Courcy. "Now, Madam, will you give me my revenge."

"No, no," said Mrs De Courcy, "I will play

no more; I should have no glory in conquering such a defenceless enemy."

"Well, then," said Montague, good-humouredly, "give me leave to read to you, for I would rather amuse you and Harriet in any other way than by sitting quietly to be laughed at."

After the ladies had retired for the night, De Courcy meditated for full five minutes on the descent from Laura Montreville's forehead to her nose, and bestowed a proportionable degree of consideration upon other important lines of her physiognomy; but it must be confessed, that by the time he arrived at the dimple in her left cheek, he had forgotten both Lavater and his opinions, and that his recollection of her mouth was somewhat confused by that of her parting smile, which he more than once declared aloud to himself was "heavenly." We are credibly informed, that he repeated the same expression three times in his sleep; and whether it was that his dreams reminded him of Mrs Dawkins's eloquence, or whether his memory was refreshed by his slumbers, he had not been long awake before he recollected, that he had heard that lady mention a Mr Wilkins, and hint that he kept a print-shop. By a proper application to the London Directo-

ry, he easily discovered the print-seller's abode, and thither he that very day repaired.

Mr Wilkins was not in the shop when De Courcy entered it, but the shop-boy said his master would be there in a minute. This minute appearing to De Courcy of unusual length, he, to while it away, began to examine the prints which hung round. His eye was presently attracted by the only oil-picture in the shop; and his attention was fixed by observing, that it presented a striking resemblance of his old school-fellow Hargrave. He turned to make some inquiry of the shop-boy, when Mr Wilkins came in, and his interest reverted to a different object. The question, however, which he had come to ask, and which to ask would have three minutes before appeared the simplest thing in the world, now faltered on his tongue; and it was not without something like hesitation, that he inquired whether Mr Wilkins knew a Miss Montreville. Desirous to oblige a person of De Courcy's appearance, Wilkins immediately related all that he knew of Laura, either from his own observation, or from the report of her loquacious landlady; and perceiving that he was listened to with attention, he proceeded further to detail his conjectures. "This picture is painted by her," said he, "and I rather think the

old Captain can't be very rich, she seemed so anxious to have it sold.

De Courcy again turned to the picture, which he had before examined, and on this second inspection was so fortunate as to discover that it bore the stamp of great genius,—an opinion in which, we believe, he would have been joined by any man of four-and-twenty who had seen the artist. "So," thought he, "this lovely creature's genius is equal to her beauty, and her worth perhaps surpasses both; for she has the courage to rise superior to the silly customs of the world, and can dare to be useful to herself and others. I knew by the noble arching of her forehead, that she was above all vulgar prejudice; and he admired Laura the more for being a favourable instance of his own penetration,—a feeling so natural, that it lessens even our enmity to the wicked, when we ourselves have predicted their vices. It must be owned, that De Courcy was a little hasty in his judgment of Laura's worth; but the sight of such a face as her's, gives great speed to a young man's decision upon female character. He instantly purchased the picture, and recollecting that it is highly proper to patronize genius and industry, he desired Mr Wilkins to beg that a companion to it might be painted. He then re-

turned home, leaving orders that his purchase should follow him immediately.

Though nature, a private education, and studious habits, made De Courcy rather reserved to strangers, he was, in his domestic circle, one of the most communicative persons in the world and the moment he saw his mother, he began to inform her of the discoveries he had made that morning. "Montreville?" said Mrs De Courcy, when he had ended, "can that be William Montreville who was in the —— regiment when your father was the major of it?"

"Most likely it is," said Montague, eagerly.

"Many a time did he hold you upon his horse, and many a paper-kite did he make for you."

"It must be the same," said Montague; "the name is not a common one; it certainly must be the same."

"I can hardly believe it," said Mrs De Courcy; "William Montreville married that strange imprudent woman, Lady Harriet Bircham. Poor Montreville!—he deserved a better wife."

"It cannot be he," said De Courcy, sorrowfully; "no such woman could be the mother of Miss Montreville."

" He settled in Scotland immediately after his marriage," continued Mrs De Courcy, " and since that time I have never heard of him."

" It is the same then," said Montague, his countenance lightening with pleasure, " for Miss Montreville is a Scotch woman. I remember his kindness. I think I almost recollect his face. He used to set me on his knee and sing to me; and when he sung the Babes in the Wood, I pretended to go to sleep in his bosom, for I thought it not manly to cry; but when I looked up, I saw the tears standing in his own eyes. I will go and see my old friend this very hour."

" You have forgotten," said Mrs De Courcy, " that you promised to escort Harriet to the Park, and she will be disappointed if you engage yourself elsewhere."

De Courcy, who would have postponed any personal gratification rather than disappoint the meanest servant in his household, instantly agreed to defer his visit; and as it had never occurred to him that the claims of relationship were incompatible with those of politeness, he did not once during their walk insinuate to his sister that he would have preferred another engagement.

Never had he, either as a physiognomist, or as a man, admired any woman so much as he

did Laura; yet her charms were no longer his only, or even his chief, magnet of attraction towards the Montrevilles. Never before had any assemblage of features possessed such power over him, but de Courcy's was not a heart on which mere beauty could make any very permanent impression; and, to the eternal disgrace of his gallantry, it must be confessed, that he scarcely longed more for a second interview with Laura, than he did for an opportunity of paying some grateful civilities to the man who, twenty years before, had good-naturedly forgone the society of his equals in age, to sing ballads and make paper-kites for little Montague. Whatever member of the family occupied most of his thoughts, certain it is, that he spoke much more that evening of Captain Montreville than of his daughter, until the arrival of the painting afforded him occasion to enlarge on her genius, industry, and freedom from vulgar prejudice. On these he continued to descant, till Mrs De Courcy smiled, and Harriet laughed outright; a liberty at which Montague testified his displeasure, by carefully avoiding the subject for the rest of the evening.

Meanwhile the ungrateful Laura had never, from the hour in which they met, bestowed one

thought upon her champion. The blackness of his eyes, and the whiteness of his teeth, had entirely escaped her observation; and, even if she had been asked whether he was tall or short, she could scarcely have given a satisfactory reply. For this extraordinary stupidity, the only excuse is, that her heart was already occupied, the reader knows how, and that her thoughts were engrossed by an intention which her father had mentioned, of borrowing money upon his half-pay.

Though Laura had never known affluence, she was equally a stranger to all the shames, the distresses, and embarrassments of a debtor; and the thoughts of borrowing what she could not hope by any economy to repay, gave to her upright mind the most cutting uneasiness. But no resource remained; for, even if Captain Montreville could have quitted London within the hour, he had not the means of defraying the expence of the journey. Warren's promises had hitherto produced nothing but hope, and there was no immediate prospect that the payment of the annuity would relieve the difficulty.

Laura turned a despairing wish towards her picture, lamenting that she had ever formed her presumptuous scheme, and hating herself for having, by her presence, increased the perplexi-

ties of her father. She prevailed on him, however, to defer borrowing the money till the following day; and once more, accompanied by Julia, bent her almost hopeless steps towards the print-shop.

Silent and melancholy she passed on, equally regardless of the admiration which she occasionally extorted, and of the animadversions, called forth by the appearance of so elegant a woman on foot, in the streets of the city. As she entered the shop, she cast a half-despairing look towards the place where her picture had hung, and her heart leapt when she perceived that it was gone. "Well, Ma'am," said Wilkins, approaching her, "it is sold at last, and here is the money;" and he put into her hands by far the largest sum they had ever contained. "You may have as much more whenever you please," continued he, "for the gentleman who bought it wants a companion painted."

Laura spoke not,—she had not indeed the power to speak;—but she raised her eyes with a look that intelligibly said, "Blessed Father! thy tender mercies are over all thy works." Recollecting herself, she thanked Wilkins, liberally rewarded him for his trouble, and then taking

her companion by the arm, she hastened homewards.

The sight of Laura's wealth powerfully affected the mind of Miss Dawkins, and she formed an immediate resolution to grow rich by similar means. One little objection to this scheme occurred to her, namely, that she had learnt to draw only flowers, and that even this humble branch of the art she had discontinued since she left school. But she thought that a little practice would repair what she had lost, and that though perhaps flowers might not be quite so productive as historical pieces, she might better her fortune by her works; at the least, they would furnish her with clothes and pocket-money. Upon this judicious plan, she harangued with great volubility to Laura, who, buried in her own reflections, walked silently on, unconscious even of the presence of her loquacious companion.

As she approached her home, she began to frame a little speech, with which she meant to present her treasure to her father; and, on entering the house, she flew with a beating heart to find him. She laid her wealth upon his knee. "My dearest father," she began, "the picture"

——and she fell upon his neck and burst into tears. Sympathetic tears stood in the eyes of Montreville. He had been surprized at the stoicism with which his daughter appeared to him to support her disappointment, and he was not prepared to expect from her so much sensibility to succees. But though Laura had learnt from frequent experience, how to cheek the feelings of disappointment, to pleasure such as she now felt she was new, and she could not control its emotions. So far was she, however, from thinking that sensibility was bestowed merely for an ornament, (an opinion which many fair ladies appear to entertain), that the expression of it was always with her an occasion of shame. Unable at this moment to contain herself, she burst from her father's embrace, and, hiding herself in her chamber, poured forth a fervent thanksgiving to Him who "feedeth the ravens when they cry to him."

"This money is your's my love," said Captain Montreville to her when she returned to the parlour. "I cannot bear to rob you of it. Take it, and you can supply me when I am in want of it." The face and neck of Laura flushed crimson. Her whole soul revolted at the thought of her father's feeling himself a pensioner on

her bounty. " No, indeed, Sir," she replied with energy, " it is your's—it always was intended for you. But for you, I could never have acquired it." " I will not disappoint your generosity, my dearest," said Montreville, " part I will receive from you, but the rest you must keep. I know you must have many little wants." " No, Papa," said Laura, " so liberal has your kindness been to me, that I cannot at this moment name a single want." " Wishes, then, you surely have," said the Captain, still pressing the money upon her; " and let the first-fruits of your industry supply them." " I have no wishes," said Laura; " none at least which money can gratify:—and when I have," added she, with an affectionate smile, " let their gratification come from you, that its pleasure may be doubled to me."

No creature could less value money for its own sake than did Laura. All her wealth, the fruit of so much labour and anxiety, would not have purchased the attire of a fashionable lady for one evening. She, who had been accustomed to wander in happy freedom among her native hills, was imprisoned amidst the smoke and dust of a city. Without a companion, almost without an ac-

quaintance to invigorate her spirits for the task, it was her province to revive the fainting hopes, and beguile the tedium of her father, who was depressed by disappointment in his pursuits, and disconcerted by the absence of his accustomed employments. She was at a distance from the object, not only of a tender affection, but of a romantic passion,—a passion, ardent in proportion as its object was indebted to her imagination for his power. Scarce three months had elapsed since the depravity of this idolized being had burst on her in thunder, the thought of it was still daggers to her heart, and it was very doubtful whether he ever could give such proofs of reformation as might make it safe for her to restore him to his place in her regard. Yet be it known to all who, from similar circumstances, feel entitled to fancy themselves miserable, and thus (if they live with beings of common humanity) make others really so, that no woman ever passed an evening in more heartfelt content, than Laura did that which our history is now recording. She did, indeed, possess that which, next to the overflowings of a pious heart, confers the purest happiness on this side Heaven. She felt that she was USEFUL. Nay, in one respect the consciousness of a successful discharge of duty has the advantage over

the fervours of devotion; for Providence, wise in its bounty, has decreed, that while these foretastes of heavenly rapture are transient, lest their delights should detach us from the business of life, we are invited to a religious practice by the permanence of its joys.

CHAP. XI.

Captain Montreville and his daughter were engaged in a friendly contest on the subject of a companion for the picture, when De Courcy made his visit. Though, as he entered the room, something unfashionably like a blush visited his face, his manner was free from rustic embarrassment. " I believe," said he, advancing towards Captain Montreville, " I must apologize for the intrusion of a stranger. My person must have outgrown your recollection. My name, I hope, has been more fortunate. It is De Courcy."

" The son I presume of Major De Courcy," said Montreville, cordially extending his hand to him.

" Yes," replied Montague, heartily taking the offered hand; " the same whose childhood was indebted to you for so many of its pleasures."

" My old friend Montague !" cried the Captain, " though your present form is new to me, I

remember my lovely little noble-spirited playfellow with an interest which I have never felt in any other child except this girl."

"And who knows," said De Courcy, turning to Laura with a smile, "who knows what cause I may find to rue that Miss Montreville is past the age when I might have repaid her father's kindness by assiduities to her doll?"

"That return," said Laura, colouring, as she recollected her late champion, "would not have been quite so arduous as the one you have already made. I hope you have had no further trouble with those rude people."

"No, Madam," answered De Courcy, "nor did I expect it; the spirits which are so insolent where they dare, are submissive enough where they must." Laura now explained to her father her obligation to De Courcy; and the Captain having thanked him for his interference, the conversation took a general turn.

Elated as he was with the successful industry and genius of his child, and pleased with the attentions of the son of his friend, the spirits of Montreville rose higher than they had ever done since his arrival in London. Won by the happy mixture of familiarity and respect, of spirit and gentleness, which distinguished the manners of

De Courcy, the Captain became cheerful, and Laura almost talkative: the conversation rose from easy to animated, from animated to gay; and two hours had passed before any of the party was aware that one-fourth of that time was gone. Laura's general reserve with strangers seemed to have forsaken her while she conversed with De Courcy.

But De Courcy was not a stranger. By character she knew him well. Hargrave had mentioned to her his intimacy with De Courcy. Nay, De Courcy had, at the hazard of his life, saved the life of Hargrave. Laura had heard her lover dwell with the eloquence of gratitude upon the courage, the presence of mind, with which (while others, confounded by his danger, or fearing for their own safety, left him to perish without aid), De Courcy had seized a fisher's net, and, binding one end of it to a tree, the other to his body, had plunged into the water, and intercepted Hargrave, just as the stream was hurrying him to the brink of a tremendous fall. "All struggle was in vain," had Hargrave said to the breathless Laura; "but for that noble fellow, that minute would have been my last, and I should have died without awakening this interest so dear to my heart." "I wish I could see this De

Courcy," had Laura fervently exclaimed. "Heaven forbid!" had been the hasty reply, "for your habits—your pursuits—your sentiments are so similar, that he would gain without labour, perhaps without a wish, the heart that has cost me such anxious toil." A recollection of this dialogue stole into the mind of Laura, as De Courcy was expressing an opinion which, though not a common one, coincided exactly with her own. For a moment she was absent and thoughtful; but De Courcy continued the conversation, and she resumed her gaiety.

When unwillingly at last he rose to take his leave, Captain Montreville detained him while he made some friendly inquiries into the history of the family for the last twenty years. As the questions of the Captain, however, were not impertinently minute, nor the answers of De Courcy very copious, it may not be improper to supply what was wanting in the narrative.

Major de Courcy was the representative of a family who could trace their descent from the time of the Conqueror,—an advantage which they valued above the hereditary possessions of their fathers; and if an advantage ought to be estimated by its durability, they were in the right; for the former, of necessity, was improved by time;

the latter seemed tending towards decline. Frederick De Courcy was suffered to follow his inclinations in entering the army; because that was the profession the most suitable to the dignity of an ancient house. That it was of all professions the least likely to improve his fortune, was a consideration equally despised hy his father and by himself. When he attained his seventeenth year, a commission was purchased for him. Stored with counsels, sufficient, if he followed them, to conduct him to wisdom and happiness, and with money sufficient to make these counsels of no avail, he set out from his paternal house to join his regiment. Thus was De Courcy, in his dangerous passage from youth to manhood, committed to the guidance of example, and the discretion belonging to his years; fortified, indeed, by the injunctions of his parents, and his own resolutions, never to disgrace his descent. But this bulwark, he soon found was too weak to resist the number and variety of the weapons which attacked him. The shafts of ridicule assailed him; his own passions took up arms; his pride itself turned against him. Unable to resist with vigour, he ceased to resist at all; and was hurried into every folly in which his companions wished

for the assistance of his purse, or for the countenance of his example.

His father's liberal allowance was soon insufficient to supply his extravagance. He contracted debts. After severe but well-merited reproof, his father paid them; and De Courcy promised amendment. A whole week of strict sobriety ensued; and the young soldier was convinced that his resolution was immutable. And so he would probably have found it, if now, for the first time since man was made, temptation had become weaker by victory, or virtue stronger by defeat. But though he had tasted the glittering bait of folly, and though he at times confessed its insipidity, the same lure again prevailed, and De Courcy was again entangled in pecuniary embarrassments. What was to be done? His father had declared his irrevocable determination no further to injure the interests of his younger children by supplying the prodigality of the eldest. By the advice of a veteran in profusion, De-Courcy had recourse to Jews. As it was in his father's power to disinherit him, it was necessary to conceal these transactions; and the high spirit of Frederick was compelled to submit to all the evasions, embarrassments, and wretchedness which attend a clandestine course of action.

Often did he illustrate the trite observation that no life is more remote from happiness than a life of pleasure. The reward of all his labour was satiety; the wages of all his self-reproach were the applauses of the thoughtless for his spirit—the lamentations of the wise, that an honourable mind should be so perverted. In his twenty-second year, his father's death left him at liberty to pay his old debts, and to contract new. That which has preserved the virtue of many young men, prevented the total ruin of De Courcy. He became attached to a virtuous woman; and influenced much by inclination, more by the wishes of her friends, she married him.

Mrs De Courcy brought no dower except the beauty which had captivated her husband, the sweetness which prolonged her power, and the good sense which made that power useful. She therefore did not think herself entitled to remonstrate very warmly on the negligence that appeared in the conduct of her husband's affairs; and it was not till after she became a mother that she judged it proper to interfere. Her gentle remonstrances, however, procured little effect beyond promises and vague resolutions, that at some "convenient season" the Major would examine into the real state of his fortune.

Accident at last befriended her endeavours. Soon after the birth of her second child (a daughter), a demand was made on De Courcy for a debt which he had not the means of discharging. He could not apply to the Jew; for he had solemnly pledged his word to Mrs De Courcy, that he would never more have recourse to that ruinous expedient. He was discussing with his wife the possibility of procuring the money by a new mortgage, while Montague, then a child of four years old, was playing in the room. Struck by the melancholy tone of his mother's voice, the child forsook his play, and taking hold of her gown, looked anxiously from one mournful face to the other. "I am as averse to it as you can be, my dear," said the Major, "but there is no other way of raising the money." "Wait till I am a man, Papa," said the child, "and then Betty says, I shall have a good two thousand pounds a-year, and I will give it all to you. And here," added he, searching his little pocket, "here is my pretty shilling that Captain Montreville gave me; take it, and don't look sorry any more." Mrs De Courcy passionately loved this child. Overcome by the feeling of the moment, she clasped him in her arms. "My

poor wronged child!" she exclaimed, and burst into tears.

These were the first words of bitterness which Major De Courcy had ever heard from her lips; and overcome by them, and by her tears, he gave her a hasty promise, that he would, that very hour, begin the examination of his affairs. Sensible of her advantage, she permitted not his purpose to slumber, but persuaded him to a full inquiry into the extent of his debts; and in order to remove him from future temptations, she prevailed on him to sell his commission, and reside at his paternal Norwood.

After selling so much of his estate as to clear the remainder from all incumbrance, he found his income diminished to little more than a third of its original extent. His family pride reviving at the sight of the halls of his fathers, and a better affection awakening in his intercourse with the descendants of those whom his ancestors had protected, he determined to guard against the possibility of Norwood and its tenants being transferred to strangers, and entailed the remains of his property on Montague De Courcy, in the strictest forms of English law. For Mrs De Courcy he made but a slender provision. For his daughter he made none: but he determined to

save from his income a sum sufficient to supply this deficiency. He was still a young man, and never thought of doubting whether he might live long enough to accomplish his design, or whether the man who had found an income of L. 2000 a-year too small for his necessities, might be able to make savings from one of L. 800. In spite of the soberness of the establishment, which, during the novelty of his reform, he allowed Mrs De Courcy to arrange, he continued to find uses for all the money he could command. His fields wanted inclosing; his house needed repairs; his son's education was an increasing expence; and he died while Montague was yet a boy, without having realized any part of his plans in favour of his daughter.

He left the highest testimony to the understanding and worth of Mrs De Courcy, by making her the sole guardian of his children; and the steady rectitude and propriety of her conduct justified his confidence. Aware of the radical defect of every mode of education which neglects or severs the domestic tie, yet convinced that the house where he was master, and the dependents whom he could command, were dangerous scenes and companions for a youth of Montague's spirit, she committed him to the care of a clergyman

whose residence was a few miles distant from Norwood, and who also took charge of four other boys of about the same age.

This gentleman was admirably fitted for his trust; for he had a cultivated understanding, an affectionate heart, sound piety, and a calm but inflexible temper. Add to which, he had travelled, and, in his youth, associated much with men of rank, and more with men of talents; though, since he had become a pastor, the range of his moral observation had been narrowed to the hearts of a few simple villagers, which were open to him as to their father and their friend. The boys studied and played together; but they had each a separate apartment; for Mr Wentworth had himself been educated at a public school, and never recollected, without shuddering, the hour when his youthful modesty first had shrunk from sharing his bed with a stranger, and when the prayer for his parents, which he was mingling with his tears, had been disturbed by the jokes of a little rabble.

Every Saturday did Montague bend his joyful course homewards, regardless of summer's heat or winter storms. Every Sunday did his mother spend in mixing the lessons of piety with the endearments of love; in striving to connect the idea

of a superintending God with all that is beautiful—all that is majestic—in nature. As her children grew up, she unfolded to them the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, so sublime, so consolatory, so suitable to the wants of man. Aware how much occasion favours the strength of impressions, she chose the hour of strong remorse on account of a youthful fault, while the culprit yet trembled before the offended Majesty of Heaven, to explain to her son the impossibility that repentance should of itself cancel errors past, or that the great Lawgiver should accept a few ineffectual tears, or a tardy and imperfect obedience, as a compensation for the breach of a law which is perfect. When she saw that the intended impression was made, she spoke of the great atonement which once was offered, not to make repentance unnecessary, but to make it effectual; and, from that time, using this as one of the great landmarks of faith, she contributed to render it in the mind of De Courcy a practical and abiding principle. The peculiar precepts of Christianity she taught him to apply to his actions, by applying them herself; and the praise which is so often lavished upon boldness, dexterity, and spirit, she conscientiously reserved for acts of candour, humility, and self-denial.

Her cares were amply rewarded, and Montague became all that she wished him to be. He was a Christian from the heart, without being either forward to claim, or ashamed to own, the distinction. He was industrious in his pursuits, and simple in his pleasures. But the distinctive feature of his character, was the total absence of selfishness. His own pleasure or his own amusement he never hesitated to sacrifice to the wishes of others; or, to speak more correctly, he found his pleasure and amusement in theirs. Upon the whole, we do not say that Montague De Courcy had no faults, but we are sure he had none which he did not strive to conquer. Like other human beings, he sometimes acted wrong; but we believe he would not deliberately have neglected a known duty to escape any worldly misfortune; we are sure he would not deliberately have committed a crime to attain any earthly advantage.

Desirous that her darling should enjoy the benefits of the most liberal education, yet afraid to trust him to the temptations of an English university, Mrs De Courcy went for some years to reside in Edinburgh during the winter—in summer she returned with her family to Norwood. To his private studies, and his paternal home, Montague returned with ever new delight; for

his tastes and his habits were all domestic. He had no ambitious wishes to lure him from his retreat, for his wants were even more moderate than his fortune. Except in so far as he could make it useful to others he had no value for money, nor for any thing that money could buy, exclusive of the necessaries of life, books, and implements of chemistry. The profession which he had chosen was that of improving and embellishing his estate; and, in the tranquil pleasures of a country gentleman, a man of taste, a classical scholar, and a chemist, he found means to occupy himself without injury to his health, his morals, or his fortune. His favourite amusements were drawing and physiognomy; and, like other favourites, these were sometimes in danger of making encroachments, and advancing into the rank of higher concerns. But this he prevented by an exact distribution of his time, to which he resolutely adhered.

With his mother and his sister he lived in the most perfect harmony, though the young lady had the reputation of wit, and was certainly a little addicted to sarcasm. But she was in other respects amiable, and incapable of doing any thing to offend her brother, whose indignation in-

deed never rose unless against cruelty, meanness, or deceit.

De Courcy had just entered his twenty-fifth year, when a rheumatic fever deprived his mother of the use of her limbs; and, forsaking all his employments, he had quitted his beloved Norwood to attend her in London, whither she had come for the benefit of medical advice. He had been but a few days in town when he met with Miss Montreville, and the impression which her beauty made, the second interview tended to confirm.

Montague had never, even in imagination, been in love. The regulation of his passions, the improvement of his mind, and the care of his property, had hitherto left him no leisure for the tender folly. He had scarcely ever thought of a young woman's face, except with a reference to Lavater's opinion, or of her manners, except to wonder how she could be so obtrusive. But, in contemplating Laura's face, he forgot the rules of the physiognomist; and, in the interesting reserve of her manners, he found continually something to desire. If, at the close of his visit, he was not in love, he was at least in a fair way for being so. He was assailed at once by beauty, grace, good sense, and sweetness; and to these

Laura added the singular charm of being wholly insensible to their effects upon the beholder. No side-glance was sent in search of admiration; no care was taken to compose her drapery; no look of triumph accompanied her judicious remarks; no parade of sensibility disgraced her tenderness. Every charm was heightened by a matchless absence of all design; and against this formidable battery had poor De Courcy to make his stand, just at the inauspicious hour when, for the first time in his life, he had nothing else to do.

CHAP. XII.

As soon as De Courcy was gone, Captain Montreville launched out warmly in his praise. Laura joined in the eulogium; and, the next moment, forgot that there was such a person in existence, when she read a letter from Mrs Douglas, of which the following was a part.

" Before this reaches you, Colonel Hargrave
" will be far on his way to London. It is pos-
" sible that you may have no interest in this jour-
" ney; but, lest you should, I wish to prevent
" your being taken by surprise. Since your de-
" parture he has repeatedly visited us; and en-
" deavoured, both directly and indirectly, to dis-
" cover your address. Perhaps you will think
" my caution ill-timed; but I acted according to
" my best judgment, in avoiding to comply with
" his desire. I think, however, that he has else-
" where procured the information he wanted;

"for his features wore an air of triumph, as he "asked my commands for you.

"Dear child of my affections, richly endowed "as you are with the dangerous gift of beauty, "you have hitherto escaped, as if by miracle, "from the snares of folly and frivolity. My "heart's prayer for you is, that you may be as "safe from the dangers which await you, in the "passions of others, and in the tenderness of "your own heart. But, alas! my beloved Laura, "distant as I am from you, ignorant as I am of "the peculiarities of your situation, I can *only* "pray for you. I fear to express my conjectures, "lest I should seem to extort your confidence. "I fear to caution, lest I should shock or offend "you. Yet let me remind you, that it is easier, "by one bold effort, to reject temptation, than to "resist its continued allurements. Effectually to "bar the access of the tempter may cost a painful "effort—to parley with him is destruction. But "I must stop. Tears of anxious affection blot "out what I have written.

"E. DOUGLAS."

The joyful expectation of seeing Hargrave filled for a time the heart of Laura, and left no room for other thoughts. The first that found

entrance was of a less pleasing cast. She perceived that Mrs Douglas suspected Hargrave of the baseness of deliberate seduction: and, with a feeling of indignation, she collected her writing materials, and sat down to exculpate him. But, as she again read her friend's expressions of affection, and considered how little the suspicion was remote from the truth, she accused herself of ingratitude and injustice in giving way to any thing like resentment. She thanked Mrs Douglas for her cautions: but assured her that the proposals of Hargrave were honourable, unequivocal, and sanctioned by her father; that they had been rejected by herself; and, therefore, that no motive, except that of vindicating him from an unfounded suspicion, should have tempted her to betray, even to her most confidential friend, a secret which she thought a woman bound, both in delicacy and in honour, to keep inviolable. She did not once hint at the cause of her rejecting an offer so splendid, nor, except by the warmth with which she defended her lover, did she show a trace of the inclination which she had so nobly sacrificed to virtue. For though she felt that her story would have raised her in her friend's esteem, she scorned to purchase that advantage at the expence

of another, and retained all her aversion to exposing the faults of Hargrave.

Having finished her letter, she returned to the more agreeable subject of contemplation, and began to calculate upon the time when she might expect to see the Colonel. Her conclusion was, that he would probably visit her on the followiug day, and her heart throbbed with delight at the prospect.

But from the dream of joy, Laura soon returned to the more habitual consideration of the line of conduct which it was fit that she should pursue. She saw the folly of committing her happiness to the guardianship of one whose passions were his masters; and, while it was her daily prayer that she might not be led into temptation, her conscience revolted from trusting her conduct to the guidance, her virtue to the example, of a man whose principles were doubtful. For Laura's virtue was not of that saint-errant kind which sallies forth in quest of opportunities to signalize itself, and inflames its pride by meditation on the wonders it would achieve, if placed in perilous situations. Distrustful of herself—watchful to avoid occasions of falling—she had no ambition for the dangerous glory of reforming a rake into a good

husband. She therefore adhered to her determination, that she would not consent to a union with her lover, till, by a course of virtuous conduct he had given proof that his offence had been the sudden fault of a moment, not the deliberate purpose of a corrupted heart.

Yet even in this mitigated view, the recollection was poison to the soul of Laura. The painful thought was far from new to her, that the passion of Hargrave was a tribute to her personal charms alone. With such a passion, even were its continuance possible, Laura felt that she could not be satisfied. To be the object of it degraded her in her own eyes. "No, no," she exclaimed, covering her face with her hands, "let me not even legally occupy only the place which the vilest might fill. If I cannot be the friend, the companion, as well as the mistress, better, far better were it, that we should part for ever."

No labour is sufficient to acquaint us fully with our own hearts. It never occurred to Laura, that she was, as much as Hargrave, the captive of mere externals; and that his character would never have deceived her penetration, had it been exhibited in the person of a little red-haired man, with bandy legs, who spoke broad

Scotch, and smoked tobacco. Till the hour when he had himself dispelled the illusion, the character of Hargrave, such as she chose to imagine it, had been to her a theme of the most delightful contemplation; and to its fascinations she had willingly and entirely resigned herself. The disguise, which was rather the excuse than the cause of her passion, had been dropped in part; yet the passion was as strong as ever. It was indeed, no longer pleasing, no longer blind, no longer paramount; for her reason, which had before been silent, was now permitted to speak, and though it was unable to conquer, it could control. She anticipated the vehemence with which Hargrave would urge her to shorten the term of his probation, and she feared that she should find it difficult, perhaps impossible, to resist his entreaties. She would not, therefore, expose her prudence to too severe a trial. "Yes," said she, "I will bar the access of the tempter. I will see Hargrave only once, and that shall be to bid him farewell, till the stipulated two years are finished. If he really loves me, his affection will survive absence. If it fail in the trial, I may, though lost to happiness, find in my solitude a peace which never can visit a neglected wife."

This philosophic conclusion was the fruit of

her meditations during a restless night; and having worked herself, as she thought, into a temper decorously relentless, she proceeded, with all the consistency of her sex, to adorn her person with a care she had never before bestowed upon it. She arranged every curl for effect; chose a dress which shewed to advantage the graceful slope of her shoulders; and heightened the whiteness of her neck and arms, by contrasting it with fillets of jet. Though she was but indifferently pleased with her success, it proved sufficient for her occasions. The day passed away, and Hargrave did not appear. Laura was disappointed, but not surprised; for it was barely possible that he could have reached London on that day. On the succeeding one she thought it likely that he might come; but the succeeding one was equally barren of event.

On the third she was certain that he would arrive; and, when breakfast was over, she seated herself in expectation at the window of the front parlour, started, if a carriage stopped, and listened to every voice that sounded from below stairs. Half-desirous to escape her father's observation, half-wishing that her interview with Hargrave should be without witnesses, she persuaded Captain Montreville to go and pay his respects to

Mrs De Courcy. Anxiously she waited, conjectured, doubted, reconsulted Mrs Douglas's letter. The Captain returned; the hours of visiting passed away; and still no Hargrave came.

Unwilling to own, even to herself, the extent of her anxiety and disappointment, Laura talked to her father of his visit, with which he had been highly pleased. He had been amused with Harriet; charmed with Mrs De Courcy; and doubly charmed with Montague, whom he praised as a scholar and a man of sense, as an affectionate brother and a respectful son; and to crown all these commendations, he declared, that De Courcy was more than a match for himself at chess.

When they retired for the night, Laura returned to her conjectures on the cause of Hargrave's delay. She considered that he might have been detained on the road, or might have found it necessary to make a visit on his way. She had little doubt, that to see her was the object of his journey to London at this unfashionable season. She had none, that he would hurry to her the first moment that it was possible. By degrees, she persuaded herself into an absolute certainty that she should see him on the following day; and on

that day, she again took her anxious station in the parlour.

She was ashamed to lean over the window, and could not otherwise see who entered the house; but she left the room door a-jar, that she might have warning of his approach, held her breath to distinguish the voices from below, and listened eagerly to every footstep. At last, she imagined that she heard the wished-for inquiry, She was sure some one pronounced her name. A man's step ascended the stair; Laura trembled and her breath came short. She feared to look up, and leant her face on her hand to conceal her emotion.

The voice of her visitor made her start, and turn her head. It was Warren!

Expectation had been wound up to its highest pitch, and Laura could not instantly recover herself. She paid her compliments with a confusion and trepidation, which Warren interpreted in a way most flattering to his vanity. He approached her with a look, in which ill-suppressed triumph contended with laboured condescension; and spoke to her in a voice that seeemed to say, "Pray, endeavour to reassure yourself." But Laura was in no humour to endure his imperti-

nence, and she seized the first opportunity to leave the room.

Captain Montreville soon entered on the business in which he took such painful interest, by inquiring whether any traces had been discovered of the sale of his daughter's annuity. Warren, with abundance of regret and condolence, informed him, that Williams had as yet been able to discover no mention of the transaction in the books.

This assertion was so far true, that Williams had as yet seen no record of the business in question; for which Mr Warren could, if he had chosen, have given a very satisfactory reason. From the moment this *gentleman* had first seen Laura, he had been determined not wilfully to expedite her departure from London; and therefore he had causally dropped a hint to his solicitor, that, as he was already overwhelmed with a multitude of affairs, it was unnecesssary to hasten a concern of such trivial importance; and that he might defer inquiring into the sale of the annuity till he was at perfect leisure. Had he insinuated to Williams, that this delay was detaining from his home a man who could ill afford the consequent expence, or that it was alarming a father for the future subsistence of his only child,

the attorney would have found leisure to investigate the matter, even if he had subtracted the necessary time from his hours of rest. But the upright Mr Warren had given no such intimation; and in this honourable transaction, he was, for the present, secure from detection, for he knew that business had called his agent to a distance from London.

Captain Montreville knew not what to think. He could not doubt the integrity of Mr Baynard, nor could he imagine to what purpose Warren should deny the transaction; since, if it had really taken place, the vouchers of it must be found among his deceased friend's papers. He was persuaded that to examine the books according to the date of the sale, could be the work of only a few hours; and again he inquired whether the necessary examination had been made. Mr Warren answered, that he could not take it upon him to say that every possible search had yet been made; but his agent, he said, had examined all the most probable records of the concern, and would, on his return to town, make a still more particular scrutiny.

With this unsatisfactory answer, Captain Montreville was obliged to content himself. He had only one alternative—either to wait in London the

appointment of the person who was to arrange Mr Baynard's papers, or to return to Scotland, and resign all hopes of the annuity. He feared, too, to offend Warren by urging him too strongly, since, even should a voucher of the payment of his L. 1500 be found, the informality in the deed would still leave room for litigation. No merely personal interest would have induced the high spirit of Montreville to conciliate a man whom he despised as a fool and a coxcomb.— For nothing that concerned himself alone, would he have submitted to the trouble and anxiety which he had lately undergone. Ill calculated by nature to struggle with difficulties, he had long been accustomed to let the lesser disasters glide by without notice, and to sink, without effort, under the greater. Disappointed in the woman of his choice, and deprived, by her folly or perverseness, of the domestic pleasures which he loved, his mind had taken a cast of melancholy. Early secluded from society, and tormented by the temper of his wife, he had concentrated all the affections which solitude confined, and caprice rejected, upon one object: and Laura became the passion of his soul. The thought of leaving her destitute, of leaving her sensibility to the scorns, her beauty to the temptations of poverty,

was more than he could bear, and it sometimes almost overpowered him. He was naturally inclined to indolence, and as, like all indolent people he was the creature of habit, his spirits had suffered much from the loss of the woman, who, though too heartless for a friend, and too bitter for a companion, had for twenty years served him as a sort of stimulus. The same force of habit, joined to her improving graces and confirming worth, made Laura daily more dear to him, and he would willingly have given his life to secure her independence and happiness.

Brooding on the obscurity in which she must remain, whom he judged worthy to adorn the highest station—on the poverty which awaited her during his life—on the want to which his death must consign her—removed from his habitual occupations, and deprived of the wholesome air and exhilarating exercises to which he had been so long accustomed, he allowed his spirits to grow daily more depressed. Along with the idea of the misfortunes which his death would bring upon his darling, the fear of death settled on his mind. The little ailments to which the sedentary are liable, he magnified into the symptoms of mortal disease; and momentary pain seemed to his fancy to foretel

sudden dissolution. Montreville was fast sinking into a melancholy hypochondriac.

His daughter's spirits, too, failed under continued expectation, and continued disappointment; for day after day passed on, and still Hargrave came not. Her father's dejection increased her own, and her ill-disguised depression had a similar effect upon him. While, however, Captain Montreville gave way without effort to his feelings, the more vigorous mind of Laura struggled to suppress the sorrow which she saw was contagious. She sometimes prevailed upon her father to seek amusement abroad, sometimes endeavoured to amuse him at home. She read to him, sung to him, exerted all her conversation talent to entertain him; and, often, when all was in vain, when he would answer her by forced smiles, languid gestures, or heavy sighs, she would turn aside to wipe the tears from her eyes, then smile and attempt her task again.

In these labours she had now, it is true, the assistance of an intelligent companion. De Courcy came often; and the Captain seemed to receive a pleasure from his visits, which even Laura's efforts could not bestow. The tenderness of his child, indeed, appeared sometimes to overpower him; for, when she was exerting herself to divert

his melancholy, he would gaze upon her for a while in an agony of fondness, then suddenly desire to be left alone, and dismiss her from his presence. But De Courcy's attentions seemed always welcome. He soothed the irritated mind with respectful assiduities—he felt for its sickly sensibility—and, though ignorant of the cause of Montreville's dejection, found in alleviating it a pleasure, which was more than doubled by the undisguised approbation and gratitude of Laura.

His sister, too, came to visit Miss Montreville, and, apologizing for her mother, who was unable to accompany her, brought an invitation for the Captain and his daughter to dine in Audley Street. Laura, in hopes of amusing her father, prevailed on him to accept the invitation; and an early day was fixed for the visit. She was pleased with the frankness and gaiety of Harriet's manner, and her curiosity was roused by Captain Montreville's praises of Mrs De Courcy.

The day arrived, and Laura prepared to accompany her father, not without trepidation at the thought of entering, for the first time in her life, a room which she expected to find full of strangers. When she had finished dressing, he examined her with triumph, and thought that nothing in nature was so perfect. The thought

was legible in his countenance, and Laura, with great simplicity, answered to it as if it had been spoken. "Except to please you," said she, "I wish I had been neither tall nor pretty, for then I should have been allowed to move about without notice." "Then, too," thought she with a heavy sigh, "I should have been loved for myself, and not have been perhaps forgotten."

Laura was not ignorant of her own beauty, but no human being could less value the distinction. She was aware of the regularity of her features; but as she never used a looking-glass, unless for the obvious purpose of arranging her dress, she was insensible of the celestial charm which expression added to her face. The seriousness and dignity of her manners made it difficult to address her with common-place compliment; and she had accordingly never experienced any effect of her beauty, but one which was altogether disagreeable to her, that of attracting notice. To being the subject of observation, Laura retained that Caledonian dislike which once distinguished her country-women, before they were polished into that glitter which attracts the vulgar, and paid for the acquisition by losing the timidity which, like the ærugo of ancient coin, adds value

in the eye of taste to intrinsic worth, while it shields even baser merit from contempt.

Laura's courage failed her when, throwing open the door of a large room, Mrs De Courcy's servant announced Captain and Miss Montreville. But she revived when she perceived that the company consisted only of the mistress of the house, her son and daughter. Mrs De Courcy's appearance seemed to Laura very prepossessing. She still wore the dress of a widow; and her countenance bore the traces of what is called a green old age; for though the hair that shaded her commanding forehead was silver white, her dark eyes retained their brightness; and though her complexion was pale, it glowed at times with the roses of youth. The expression of her face, which was serious even to solemnity, brightened with a smile of inexpressible benevolence, as she received her guests; and, even in the difficulty with which she appeared to move, Laura found somewhat interesting. Her air and manners, without a tincture of fashion, spoke the gentlewoman. Her dress, her person, her demeanour, every thing about her seemed consistently respectable.

The dinner was plain, but excellent. The few indispensable pieces of plate were antique and

massive; and the only attendant who appeared, seemed to have grown grey in the service of the family. Laura had pleasure in observing, that the reverence with which this old man addressed his lady, softened into affectionate solicitude to please when he attended De Courcy, who, in his turn, seemed to treat him with the most considerate gentleness.

Mrs De Courcy behaved to Laura with distinguished politeness; addressed her often; endeavoured to draw forth her latent powers; and soon made her sensible that the impression she had given, was no less favourable than that which she had received. Montague's conversation had its accustomed effect on Montreville, and the lively Harriet gave spirit to the whole. The evening passed most agreeably; and Laura was sorry when the hour of separation arrived. Mrs De Courcy courteously thanked her for her visit, and begged her to repeat it; but Harriet sportively objected: "No, no," said she, "if you come back, you will not leave a heart among all the household—even old John's seems in danger."

"Well, mamma," continued she, when Laura was gone, "what do you think of my brother's beauty?" "I think," said Mrs De Courcy, "that

Montague's praises did her no more than justice. She is the most lovely, the most elegant woman I ever saw." "She is no doubt beautiful and interesting," returned Harriet; "but I must still think she has too much of the buckram of the old school to be elegant." Montague bit his lip, and tried, before he spoke, to ascertain that he was not angry. "You are too severe, Harriet," said Mrs De Courcy. "Miss Montreville's reserve is not stiffness—it is not 'buckram;' it is rather the graceful drapery, embellishing what it veils." "Mother," cried Montague, grasping her hand, "you have more candour, sense, and taste, than all the misses in England." "Oh! pray, except Miss Montreville and the present company," said Harriet, laughing. "She, you know, is all perfection: and *I* have really candour, sense, and taste enough to admire her more than ever I did any woman, except my little self." De Courcy threw his arm round her—"I see by that good-natured smile," said he, "that my dear Harriet has at least candour enough to pardon the folly of a wayward brother." And, for the rest of the evening, he treated her with even more than his usual attentive kindness.

From this day Miss De Courcy frequently accompanied her brother on his visits to the Mon-

trevilles, and Laura was a welcome guest in Audley Street. By degrees Mrs De Courcy and she discovered the real worth of each other's character, and their mutual reserve entirely disappeared. Between Laura and De Courcy, almost from the first hour of their acquaintance, there seemed (to use the language of romance) a sympathy of souls;—an expression which, if it has any meaning, must mean the facility with which simple, upright, undesigning minds become intelligible to each other. Even the sarcastic Harriet found, in the chaste propriety of Laura's character, something to command respect; and in her gentleness and warmth of heart, something to engage affection; while, in her ideas, which solitude had slightly tinged with romance, though strong sense had preserved them from absurdity, and in her language, which sometimes rose to the very verge of poetry, she found constantly somewhat to interest and amuse.

Meanwhile Montreville's dejection seemed to increase; and Laura's health and spirits, in spite of her efforts to support them, daily declined. Hargrave did not appear, and vainly did she endeavour to account for his absence. She at first conjectured that he had found it impossible to leave Scotland at the time he proposed; but a

second letter from Mrs Douglas had mentioned his departure, and repeated the assurance that, however obtained, he had information of Laura's address, since he had undertaken to be the bearer of a letter from a neighbouring gentleman to Captain Montreville.

She next supposed that he had stopped on the road, or quitted it on some errand of business or pleasure—but a newspaper account of a fête champêtre, at Lady Bellamer's elegant villa at Richmond, was graced, among other fashionable names, with that of the handsome Colonel Hargrave, nephew and heir of Lord Lincourt. No supposition remained to be made, except the mortifying one, that three months of absence had erased her image from the fickle heart of Hargrave. She, who had herself consigned her lover to a banishment of two years, could not bear that he should voluntarily undergo one of a few weeks. Nay, she had once herself resigned him; but to be herself resigned without effort, was more than she could endure. Her appetite, her sleep forsook her; her ordinary employments became irksome; and even the picture, the price of which was so soon to be necessary, she had not spirits to finish.

But one who was accustomed every night to

examine the thoughts and actions of the day, was not likely to remain long a prey to inactive melancholy. Not satisfied with languid efforts in the discharge of duty, she reproached herself for every failure. She upbraided herself as a wicked and slothful servant, who, when the means of usefulness were put within her power, suffered them to remain unimproved; as a rebel who had deserted the service of her rightful master, to bow to the worse than Egyptian bondage of her passions. She accused herself of having given up her love, her wishes, her hopes and fears, almost her worship, to an idol; and no sooner did this thought occur to the pious mind of Laura, than she became resigned to her loss. She even felt grateful—with such gratitude as the wretch feels under the knife which amputates the morbid limb.

Unused to let her self-reproaches pass without improvement, she resolved, by vigorous efforts, to become herself again. She even called in the aid of a decent pride. "Shall I," she cried, "who have vowed to overcome the world—I who have called myself by that glorious name, a Christian, sink from these honours into a love-sick girl? Shall all my happiness, all my duties, the comfort of my father, the very means of his support,

be sacrificed to a selfish passion? Or is a love whose transient duration has proved its degenerate nature, of such value to me, that I must repay it with my whole heart and soul?"

These reflections were not made at once, nor were they at once effectual: but, when made, they were called in as oft as the image of Hargrave intruded unbidden; and constant and regular occupation was again employed to second their operation. The picture was again resorted to; but, as it afforded rather an unsocial employment, and as Laura's company was more than ever necessary to her father, it proceeded slowly.

De Courcy was now a daily visitor. Sometimes he brought books, and would spend hours in reading aloud. Sometimes he would amuse the Captain and his daughter by experiments in his favourite science. With a gentleness peculiar to himself, he tried to prevent the little annoyances to which hypochondriacs are subject. He invented a hundred little indulgencies for the invalid; and no day passed in which Montreville was not indebted for some comfort, or some amusement, to the considerate kindness of De Courcy. At times he would gently rally the Captain on his imaginary ailments, and sometimes prevailed on him to take an airing in Mrs De Courcy's carriage: though

to such a height had fancy worked upon the invalid, that Montague found it impossible to persuade him that he was able to endure the fatigue of walking.

To Laura, De Courcy's behaviour, uniformly respectful and attentive, was sometimes even tender. But, accustomed to see love only in the impassioned looks of Hargrave, to hear its accents only in his words of fire, she did not recognize it in a new form; and to consider De Courcy as a lover, never once entered her imagination. Captain Montreville was more clear-sighted and hence arose much of the pleasure which he took in De Courcy's visits. Not that he was more knowing in the mysteries of love than his daughter; but he took it for granted that no mortal could withstand her attractions; and he was persuaded that Laura would not withhold her heart, where she so freely expresssed approbation. This opinion was a proof of the justice of the Captain's former confession, " that women were creatures he did not understand." Laura had never praised Hargrave. She never shrunk from De Courcy's eye,—she never felt embarrassed by his presence, —she treated him with the frankness of a sister; and though she reserved her commendations for his absence, she waited only for that to bestow

them with all the warmth which his own merit and his attention to her father could demand.

Meanwhile Montreville did not, by a premature disclosure of his hopes, endanger their completion; and De Courcy continued unconsciously to foster in his bosom, a passion which was destined to destroy his peace.

CHAP. XIII.

The picture at last was finished, and Laura herself accompanied it to the print-shop. Wilkins immediately delivered to her the price, which, he said, had been for some time in his hands. It now occurred to Laura to ask who had been the purchaser of her work. "Why, Ma'am," said Wilkins, "the gentleman desired me not to mention his name." "Indeed!" said Laura, surprised. "These were his orders, Ma'am, but I shouldn't think there could be any great harm in telling it just to you, Ma'am." "I have no wish to hear it," said Laura, with a look which compelled the confidant to unwilling discretion; and again thanking him for the trouble he had taken, she returned home. The truth was, that De Courcy had foreseen the probability of Laura's question; and averse to be known to her under a character which savoured of patronage and protection, had forbid-

den the shopkeeper to mention who had purchased the pictures.

Again did Laura, delighted, present to her father the produce of her labours, her warm heart glowing with the joys of usefulness. But not as formerly did he with pleasure receive the gift. With the fretfulness of disease, he refused to share in her satisfaction. Through the gloom of melancholy, every object appeared distorted; and Captain Montreville saw in his daughter's well-earned treasure only the wages of degrading toil.

"It is hard, very hard," said he, with a deep sigh, "that you, my lovely child, the descendant of such a family, should be dependent on your daily labour for your support."

"Oh call it not hard, my dear father," cried Laura. "Thanks, a thousand thanks to your kind foresight, which, in teaching me this blessed art, secured to me the only real independence, by making me independent of all but my own exertions."

"Child," said Montreville, fretfully, "there is an enthusiasm about you which will draw you into ten thousand errors—you are quite mistaken in fancying yourself independent. Your boasted art depends upon the taste, the very caprice of the

public for its reward; and you, of course, upon the same caprice for your very existence."

"It is true," answered Laura mildly, "that my success depends upon taste, and that the public taste is capricious; but some, I should hope, will never be wanting, who can value and reward the labours of industry—you observe," added she with a smile, "that I rest nothing upon genius."

"Be that as it may," returned Captain Montreville, with increasing querulousness, "I cannot endure to see you degraded into an artist, and therefore I desire there may be no more of this traffic."

This was the first time that Montreville had ever resorted to the method well known and approved by those persons of both sexes, who, being more accustomed to the exercise of authority than of argument, choose to wield the weapon in the use of which practice has made them the most expert. Laura looked at him with affectionate concern— "Alas!" thought she, "if bodily disease be pitiable, how far more deplorable are its ravages on the mind." But even if her father had been in perfect health, she would not have chosen the moment of irritation for reply. Deeply mortified at this unexpected prohibition, she yet endeavour-

ed to consider it as only one of the transient caprices of illness, and to find pleasure in the thought, that the hour was come when De Courcy's daily visit would restore her father to some degree of cheerfulness.

But De Courcy's visit made no one cheerful. He was himself melancholy and absent. He said he had only a few minutes to spare, yet lingered above an hour; often rose to go, yet irresolutely resumed his seat. At last, starting up, he said, "the longer I remain here, the more unwilling I am to go; and yet I *must* go, without even knowing when I may return." "Are *you* going to leave us?" said Montreville, in a tone of despondency, "then we shall be solitary indeed." "I fear," said Laura, looking with kind solicitude in De Courcy's face, "that something distressing calls you away." "Distressing indeed," said De Courcy. "My excellent old friend Mr Wentworth has lost his only son, and I must bear the news to the parents." "Is there no one but you to do this painful office?" asked Montreville. "None," answered De Courcy, "on whom it could with such propriety fall. Wentworth was one of my earliest friends, he was my father's early friend. I owe him a thousand obligations; and I would fain if it be possible, soften this heavy blow.

Besides," added he, endeavouring to speak more cheerfully, "I have a selfish purpose to serve—I want to see how a Christian bears misfortune." "And can you fix no time for your return?" asked the Captain, mournfully. De Courcy shook his head. "You will not return while your presence is necessary to Mr Wentworth," said Laura, less anxious to regain De Courcy's society, than that he should support the character of benevolence with which her imagination had justly vested him. Grieved by the prospect of losing his companion, fretted by an indefinite idea that he was wrong in his ungracious rejection of his daughter's efforts to serve him, ashamed of his distempered selfishness, yet unable to conquer it, Captain Montreville naturally became more peevish; for the consciousness of having acted wrong, without the resolution to repair the fault, is what no temper can stand. "Your charity is mighty excursive Laura," said he. "If Mr De Courcy delay his return long, I shall probably not live to profit by it." Laura, whose sweetness no captious expressions could ruffle, would have spoken to turn her father's views to brighter prospects; but the rising sob choked her voice, and courtesying hastily to De Courcy, she left the room. De Courcy now no longer found it difficult to depart. He

soon bade the Captain farewell, promising to return as soon as it was possible, though he had no great faith in Montreville's dismal prediction, uttered in the true spirit of hypochondriasis, that he would come but to lay his head in the grave.

As he was descending the stairs, Laura, who never forgot in selfish feeling to provide for the comforts of others, followed him, to beg that when he had leisure he would write to her father. Laura blushed and hesitated as she made this request, not because she had in making it any selfish motive whatever, but purely because she was unused to ask favours. Flattered by the re quest, but much more by her confusion, the countenance of De Courcy glowed with pleasure. "Certainly I shall write," said he, with great animation, "if you—I mean if Captain Montreville wish it." These words, and the tone in which they were uttered, made Laura direct a look of inquiry to the speaker's face, where his thoughts were distinctly legible; and she no sooner read them, than, stately and displeased, she drew back "I believe it will give my father pleasure to hear from you, Sir," said she, and coldly turned away. "Is there no man," thought she, "exempt from this despicable vanity—from the insignificant Warren to the respectable De Courcy?" Poor Mon-

tague would fain have besought her forgiveness for his presumption in supposing it possible that she could have any pleasure in hearing of him; but the look with which she turned from him, left him no courage to speak to her again, and he mournfully pursued his way to Audley Street.

He was scarcely gone when Warren called, and Laura, very little disposed for his company, took shelter in her own room. Her father, however, suffered no inconvenience from being left alone to the task of entertaining his visitor, for Warren found means to make the conversation sufficiently interesting.

He began by lamenting the Captain's long detention from his home, and condoled with him upon the effects which London air had produced upon his health. He regretted that Mr Williams's absence from town had retarded the final settlement of Montreville's business; informed him that Mr Baynard's executors had appointed an agent to inspect his papers; and finally, surprised him by an unconditional offer to sign a new bond for the annuity. He could not bear, he said, to think of the Captain's being detained in London to the prejudice of his health, especially as it was evident that Miss Montreville's suffered from the same cause. He begged that a

regular bond might be drawn up, which he would sign at a moment's notice, and which he would trust to the Captain's honour to destroy, if it should be found that the L. 1500, mentioned as the price of the annuity, had never been paid.

At this generous proposal, surprise and joy almost deprived Montreville of the power of utterance; gratefully clasping Warren's hand, " Oh, Sir," he exclaimed, " you have, I hope, secured an independence for my child. I thank you—with what fervour, you can never know till you are yourself a father." Seemingly anxious to escape from his thanks, Warren again promised that he would be ready to sign the bond on the following day, or as soon as it was ready for signature. Captain Montreville again began to make acknowledgments, but Warren, who appeared rather distressed than gratified by them, took his leave, and left the Captain to the joyful task of communicating the news to Laura

She listened with grateful pleasure. " How much have I been to blame," said she, " for allowing myself to believe that a little vanity necessarily excluded every kind and generous feeling. What a pity it is that this man should condescend to such an effeminate attention to trifles!" Lost to the expectation, almost to the desire of seeing

Hargrave, she now had no tie to London, but one which was soon to be broken, for Mrs and Miss De Courcy were about to return to Norwood. With almost unmixed satisfaction, therefore, she heard her father declare, that in less than a week he should be on his way to Scotland. With pleasure she looked forward to revisiting her dear Glenalbert, and anticipated the effects of its quiet shades and healthful air upon her father. Already she beheld her home, peaceful and inviting, as when, from the hill that sheltered it, she last looked back upon its simple beauties. She heard the ripple of its waters; she trod the well-known path; met the kind familiar face, and listened to the cordial welcome, with such joy as they feel who return from the land of strangers.

Nor was Montreville less pleased with the prospect of returning to his accustomed comforts and employments—of feeling himself once more among objects which he could call his own. His own! There was magic in the word, that transformed the cottage at Glenalbert into a fairy palace—the garden and the farm into a little world. To leave London interfered indeed with his hopes of De Courcy as a lover for his daughter; but he doubted not that the impression was al-

ready made, and that Montague would follow Laura to Scotland.

His mind suddenly relieved from anxiety, his spirits rose, all his constitutional good nature returned, and he caressed his daughter with a fondness that seemed intended to atone for the captious behaviour of the morning. At dinner he called for wine, a luxury in which he rarely indulged, drank to their safe arrival at Glenalbert, and obliged Laura to pledge him to the health of Warren. To witness her father's cheerfulness was a pleasure which Laura had of late tasted so sparingly, that it had the most exhilarating effect upon her spirits; and neither De Courcy nor Hargrave would have been much gratified, could they have seen the gaiety with which she supported the absence of the one, and the neglect of the other.

She was beginning to enjoy one of those cheerful domestic evenings which had always been her delight, when Miss Dawkins came to propose that she should accompany her and her mother on a visit to Mrs Jones. Laura would have excused herself, by saying, that she could not leave her father alone; but the Captain insisted upon her going, and declared that he would himself be of the party. She had therefore no apology,

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and, deprived of the amusement which she would have preferred, contentedly betook herself to that which was within her reach. She did not sit in silent contemplation of her own superiority, or of the vulgarity of her companions; nor did she introduce topics of conversation calculated to illustrate either; but having observed that even the most ignorant have some subject on which they can talk with ease and pleasure, and even be heard with advantage, she suffered others to lead the discourse, rightly conjecturing that they would guide it to the channel which they judged most favourable to their own powers. She was soon engaged with Mrs Dawkins in a dissertation on various branches of household economy, and to the eternal degradation of her character as a heroine, actually listened with interest to the means of improving the cleanliness, beauty, and comfort of her dwelling.

Mrs Jones was highly flattered by the Captain's visit, and exerted herself to entertain him, her husband being inclined to taciturnity by a reason which Bishop Butler has pronounced to be a good one. Perceiving that Montreville was an Englishman, she concluded that nothing but dire necessity could have exiled him to Scotland. She inquired what town he lived in; and being an-

swered that his residence was many miles distant from any town, she held up her hands in pity and amazement. But when she heard that Montreville had been obliged to learn the language of the Highlands, and that it was Laura's vernacular tongue, she burst into an exclamation of wonder. " Mercy upon me," cried she, " can you make that outlandish spluttering so as them savages can know what you says? Well, if I had been among them a thousand years, I should never have made out a word of their gibberish."

" The sound of it is very uncouth to a stranger," said Captain Montreville, " but now I have learnt to like it."

" And do them there wild men make you wear them little red and green petticoats?" asked Mrs Jones, in a tone of compassionate inquiry.

" Oh no," said Captain Montreville, " they never interfered with my dress. But you seem quite acquainted with the Highlands. May I ask if you have been there?"

" Ay, that I have, to my sorrow," said Mrs Jones; and forthwith proceeded to recount her adventures, pretty nearly in the same terms as she had formerly done to Laura.

" And what was the name of this unfortunate place?" inquired the Captain, when, having nar-

rated the deficiency of hot-rolls, Mrs Jones made the pause in which her auditors were accustomed to express their astonishment and horror.

"That was what I asked the waiter often and often," replied she, "but I never could make head or tail of what he said. Sometimes it sounded like *A rookery;* sometimes like one thing, sometimes like another. So I takes the road-book and looks it out, and it looked something like A rasher, only not right spelt. So, thinks I, they'll call it a *A rasher,* because there is good bacon here; and I asked the man if they were famous for pigs; and he said, no, they got all their pigs from the manufactory in Glasgow, and that they weren't famous for any thing but fresh herrings, as are catched in that black Loch-Lomond, where they wanted me to go."

"Kate," said Mr Jones, setting down his tea-cup, and settling his hands upon his knees, "you know I think you're wrong about them herrings."

"Mr Jones," returned the lady, with a look which shewed that the herrings had been the subject of former altercation, "for certain the waiter told me that they came out of the loch, and to what purpose should he tell lies about it?"

"I tells you, Kate, that herrings come out of the sea," said Mr Jones.

" Well, that loch is a great fresh water sea," said Mrs Jones.

" Out of the salt sea," insisted Mr Jones.

" Ay," said Mrs Jones, " them salt herrings as we gets here, but it stands to reason, Mr Jones, that the fresh herrings should come out of fresh water."

" I say, cod is fresh, and does'n't it come out of the sea? answer me that Mrs Jones."

" It is no wonder the cod is fresh," returned the lady, " when the fishmongers keep fresh water running on it day and night."

" Kate, it's of no use argufying, I say herrings come out of the sea. What say you, Sir?" turning to Captain Montreville.

The Captain softened his verdict in the gentleman's favour, by saying, that Mrs Jones was right in her account of the waiter's report, though the man, in speaking of " the loch," meant not Loch-Lomond, but an arm of the sea.

" I know'd it," said Mr Jones, triumphantly, " for haven't I read it in the newspaper as Government offers a reward to any body that'll put most salt upon them Scotch herrings, and is'n't that what makes the salt so dear?" So having settled this knotty point to his own satisfaction, Mr Jones again applied himself to his tea.

"Did you return to Glasgow by the way of Loch-Lomond?" inquired Captain Montreville.

"Ay," cried Mrs Jones, "that was what the people of the inn wanted us to do; but then I looked out, and seed a matter of forty of them there savages, with the little petticoats and red and white stockings, loitering and lolling about the inn-door, doing nothing in the varsal world, except wait till it was dark to rob and murder us all, bless us! So, thinks I, let me once get out from among you, in a whole skin, and catch me in the Highlands again: so as soon as the chaise could be got, we just went the way we came."

"Did you find good accommodation at Glasgow?" said the Captain.

"Yes," replied Mrs Jones; "but after all, Captain, there's no country like our own;—do you know, I never got so much as a buttered muffin all the while I was in Scotland!"

The conversation was here interrupted by an exclamation from Mrs Dawkins, who, knowing that she had nothing new to expect in her daughter's memoirs of her Scotish excursion, had continued to talk with Laura apart. "Goodness me!" she cried, "why Kate, as sure as eggs,

here's Miss never seed a play in all her life!" "Never saw a play! Never saw a play!" exclaimed the landlord and landlady at once. "Well, that's so odd; but to be sure, poor soul, how should she, among them there hills." "Suppose," said Mrs Jones, "we should make a party, and go to-night.—We shall be just in time." Laura was desirous to go: her father made no objection; and Mr Jones, with that feeling of good-natured self-complacency which most people have experienced, arising from the discovery that another is new to a pleasure with which they themselves are familiar, offered, as he expressed it, "to do the genteel thing, and treat her himself."

The party was speedily arranged, and Laura soon found herself seated in the pit of the theatre. The scene was quite new to her; for her ignorance of public places was even greater than her companions had discovered it to be. She was dazzled with the glare of the lights, and the brilliance of the company, and confused with the murmur of innumerable voices; but the curtain rose, and her attention was soon confined to the stage. The play was the Gamester, the most domestic of our tragedies; and, in the inimitable representation of Mrs Beverly, Laura found an

illusion strong enough to absorb for the time every faculty of her soul. Of the actress she thought not; but she loved and pitied Mrs Beverly with a fervour that made her insensible to the amusement which she afforded to her companions. Meanwhile her countenance,—as beautiful, almost as expressive,—followed every change in that of Mrs Siddons. She wept with her; listened, started, rejoiced with her; and when Mrs Beverly repulsed the villain Stukely, Laura's eyes too flashed with "heaven's own lightnings." By the time the representation was ended, she was so much exhausted by the strength and rapidity of her emotions, that she was scarcely able to answer to the questions of "How have you been amused?" and "How did you like it?" with which her companions all at once assailed her. "Well," said Miss Julia, when they were arrived at home, "I think nothing is so delightful as a play. I should like to go every night—shouldn't you?" "No," answered Laura. "Once or twice in a year would be quite sufficient for me. It occupies my thoughts too much for a mere amusement."

In the course of the two following days, Laura had sketched more than twenty heads of Mrs Siddons, besides completing the preparations for

her journey to Scotland. On the third, the Captain, who could now smile at his own imaginary debility, proposed to carry the bond to receive Mr Warren's signature. The fourth was to be spent with Mrs De Courcy; and on the morning of the fifth, the travellers intended to depart.

On the appointed morning, Captain Montreville set out on an early visit to Portland Street, gaily telling his daughter at parting that he would return in an hour or two, with her dowery in his pocket. When he knocked at Mr Warren's door, the servant informed him that his master had gone out, but that expecting the Captain to call, he had left a message to beg that Montreville would wait till he returned, which would be very soon.

The Captain was then shewn into a back parlour, where he endeavoured to amuse himself with some books that were scattered round the room. They consisted of amatory poems and loose novels, and one by one he threw them aside in disgust, lamenting that one who was capable of a kind and generous action should seek pleasure in such debasing studies. The room was hung with prints and pictures, but they partook of the same licentious character; and Montreville shuddered, as the momentary thought darted a-

cross his mind, that it was strange that the charms of Laura had made no impression on one whose libertinism in regard to her sex was so apparent. It was but momentary. "No!" thought he, "her purity would awe the most licentious; and I am uncandid, ungrateful, to harbour even for a moment such an idea of the man who has acted towards her and me with the most disinterested benevolence."

He waited long, but Warren did not appear; and he began to blame himfelf for having neglected to fix the exact time of his visit. To remedy this omission, he rung for writing materials, and telling the servant that he could stay no longer, left a note to inform Mr Warren that he would wait upon him at twelve o'clock next day. The servant, who was Mr Warren's own valet, seemed unwilling to allow the Captain to depart, and assured him that he expected his master every minute; but Montreville, who knew that there was no depending upon the motions of a mere man of pleasure, would be detained no longer.

He returned home, and finding the parlour empty, was leaving it to seek Laura in her painting-room, when he observed a letter lying on the table addressed to himself. The hand-writing was

new to him. He opened it—the signature was equally so. The contents were as follows:—

"Sir,

"The writer of this letter is even by name a "stranger to you. If that circumstance should "induce you to discredit my information, I offer "no proof of my veracity, but this simple one, "that obviously no selfish end can be served by "my present interference. Of the force of my "motive you cannot judge, unless you have your-"self lured to destruction the heart which trusted "you,—seen it refuse all comfort,—reject all re-"paration,—and sink at last in untimely decay.

"From a fate like this, though not softened like "this by anxious tenderness, nor mourned like this "by remorseful pity, but aggravated by being "endured for one incapable of any tender or ge-"nerous feeling, it is my purpose, Sir, to save "your daughter. I was last night one of a party "where her name was mentioned;—where she "was described as lovely, innocent, and respect-"able; yet the person who so described her, "scrupled not to boast of a plan for her destruc-"tion. In the hope (why should I pretend a "better motive?) of softening the pangs of late "but bitter self-reproach, by saving one fellow-

"creature from perhaps reluctant ruin, one fa-
"mily from domestic shame, I drew from him
"your address, and learnt that, to ingratiate him-
"self with you, and with his intended victim, he
"has pretended to offer as a gift, what he knew
"that he could not long withhold. He means
"to take the earliest opportunity of inveigling
"her from your care, secure, as he boasts, of her
"pardon in her attachment. Ill, indeed, does
"her character, even as described by him, accord
"with such a boast; yet even indifference might
"prove no guard against fraud, which, thus warn-
"ed, you may defy.

"A fear that my attention should be frustrated
"by the merited contempt attached to anonymous
"information, inclines me to add my name,
"though aware that it can claim no authority
"with a stranger.

"I am, SIR,

"Your obedient Servant,

"PHILIP WILMOT."

Captain Montreville read this letter more than once. It bore marks of such sincerity that he knew not how to doubt of the intelligence it gave; and he perceived with dismay that the business which he had considered as closed, was as

far as ever from a conclusion; for how could he accept a favour which he had been warned to consider as the wages of dishonour. For Laura he had indeed no fear. She was no less safe in her own virtue and discretion, than in the contemptuous pity with which she regarded Warren. This letter would put her upon her guard against leaving the house with him, which Captain Montreville now recollected that he had often solicited her to do, upon pretence of taking the air in his curricle.

But must he still linger in London; still be cheated with vain hopes; still fear for the future subsistence of his child; still approach the very verge of poverty; perhaps be obliged to defend his rights by a tedious law-suit? His heart sunk at the prospect, and he threw himself on a seat, disconsolate and cheerless.

He had long been in the habit of seeking relief from every painful feeling in the tenderness of Laura,—of finding in her enduring spirit a support to the weakness of his own; and he now sought her in the conviction that she would either discover some advantage to be drawn from this disappointment, or lighten it to him by her affectionate sympathy. He knocked at her door —She did not answer. He called her.—All was

silent. He rung the bell, and inquired whether she was below, and was answered that she had gone out with Mr Warren in his curricle two hours before. The unfortunate father heard no more. Wildly striking his hand upon his breast, " She is lost," he cried, and sunk to the ground. The blood burst violently from his mouth and nostrils, and he became insensible.

The family were soon assembled round him; and a surgeon being procured, he declared that Montreville had burst a blood-vessel, and that nothing but the utmost care and quiet could save his life. Mrs Dawkins, with great humanity, attended him herself, venting in whispers to the surgeon her compassion for Montreville, and her indignation against the unnatural desertion of Laura, whom she abused as a methodistical hypocrite, against whom her wrath was the stronger because she could never have suspected her.

Montreville no sooner returned to recollection, than he declared his resolution instantly to set off in search of his child. In vain did the surgeon expostulate, and assure him that his life would be the forfeit: his only answer was, " Why should I live? She is lost." In pursuance of his design, he tried to rise from the bed on which he had

been laid; but exhausted nature refused to second him, and he again sunk back insensible.

When Montreville called in Portland Street, the servant had deceived him in saying that Warren was not at home. He was not only in the house, but expecting the Captain's visit, and prepared to take advantage of it, for the accomplishment of the honourable scheme of which he had boasted to his associates. As soon, therefore, as the servant had disposed of Montreville, Warren mounted his curricle, which was in waiting at a little distance, and driving to Mrs Dawkins's, informed Laura that he had been sent to her by her father, who proposed carrying her to see the British Museum, and for that purpose was waiting her arrival in Portland Street. Entirely unsuspicious of any design, Laura accompanied him without hesitation; and though Portland Street appeared to her greatly more distant than she had imagined, it was not till having taken innumerable turns, she found herself in an open road, that she began to suspect her conductor of having deceived her.

"Whither have you taken me, Mr Warren?" she inquired: "This road does not lead to Portland Street." "Oh yes, it does," answered Warren, "only the way is a little circuitous." "Let

us immediately return to the straight one then," said Laura. "My father will be alarmed, and conclude that some accident has happened to us." "Surely, my charming Miss Montreville," said Warren, still continuing to drive on, "you do not fear to trust yourself with me." "Fear *you!*" repeated Laura, with involuntary disdain. "No, but I am at loss to guess what has encouraged you to make me the companion of so silly a frolic. I suppose you mean this for an ingenious joke upon my father." "No, 'pon my soul," said the beau, a little alarmed by the sternness of her manner, "I mean nothing but to have an opportunity of telling you that I am quite in love with you,—dying for you,—faith I am." "You should first have ascertained," answered Laura, with ineffable scorn, "whether I was likely to think the secret worth a hearing. I desire you will instantly return."

The perfect composure of Laura's look and manner (for feeling no alarm she shewed none) made Warren conclude that she was not averse to being detained; and he thought it only necessary that he should continue to make love, to induce her quietly to submit to go on for another half mile, which would bring them to a place where he thought she would be secure. He began,

therefore, to act the lover with all the energy he could muster; but Laura interrupted him. "It is a pity," said she, with a smile of calm contempt, "to put a stop to such well-timed gallantry, which is indeed just such as I should have expected from Mr Warren's sense and delicacy. But I would not for the sake of Mr Warren's raptures, nor all else that he has to offer, give my father the most momentary pain, and therefore if you do not suffer me alight this instant, I shall be obliged to claim the assistance of passengers on an occasion very little worthy of their notice." Her contumelious manner entirely undeceived her companion in regard to her sentiments; but it had no other effect upon him, except that of adding revenge to the number of his incitements; and perceiving that they were now at a short distance from the house whither he intended to convey her, he continued to pursue his way.

Laura now rose from her seat, and seizing the reins with a force which made the horses rear, she coolly chose that moment to spring from the curricle; and walked back towards the town, leaving her inamorato in the utmost astonishment at her self-possession, as well as rage at her disdainful treatment.

She proceeded till she came to a decent-look-

ing shop, where she entered ; and, begging permission to sit down, dispatched one of the shop-boys in search of a hackney-coach. A carriage was soon procured, and Laura, concluding that her father, tired of waiting for her, must have left Portland Street, desired to be driven directly home.

As she entered the house, she was met by Mrs Dawkins. "So Miss," cried she, "you have made a fine spot of work on't. You have murdered your father." "Good heavens !" cried Laura, turning as pale as death, "what is it you mean ? where is my father ?" "Your father is on his death-bed Miss, and you may thank your morning rides for it. Thinking you were off, he burst a blood-vessel in the fright, and the doctor says, the least stir in the world will finish him."

Laura turned sick to death. Cold drops stood upon her forehead : and she shook in every limb. She made an instinctive attempt to ascend the stair ; but her strength failed her, and she sunk upon the steps. The sight of her agony changed in a moment Mrs Dawkins's indignation into pity. "Don't take on so, Miss," said she, "to be sure you did'nt mean it. If he is kept quiet, he may mend still, and now that you're come back too.—

By the bye, I may as well run up and tell him."

"Oh stop!" cried Laura, reviving at once in the sudden dread that such incautious news would destroy her father. "Stay," said she, pressing with one hand her bursting forehead, while with the other she detained Mrs Dawkins.—"Let me think, that we may not agitate him. Oh no! I cannot think;" and leaning her head on Mrs Dawkins's shoulder, she burst into an agony of tears.

These salutary tears restored her recollection, and she inquired whether the surgeon, of whom Mrs Dawkins had spoken, was still in the house. Being answered, that he was in Montreville's apartment, she sent to beg that he would speak with her. He came, and she entreated him to inform her father, with the caution which his situation required, that she was returned and safe. She followed him to the door of Montreville's apartment, and stood listening in trembling expectation to every thing which stirred within. At last she received the wished-for summons. She entered; she sprung towards the bed. "My child!" cried Montreville, and he clasped her to his bosom, and sobbed aloud. When he was able to speak, "Oh Laura," said he, "tell me again that you are safe, and say by what miracle,

by what unheard-of mercy, you have escaped."

"Compose yourself, my dearest father, for Heaven's sake," cried Laura. "I am indeed safe, and never have been in danger. When Warren found that I refused to join in his frolic, he did not attempt to prevent me from returning home."

She then briefly related the affair as it had appeared to her, suppressing Warren's rhapsodies, from the fear of irritating her father; and he, perceiving that she considered the whole as a frolic, frivolous in its intention, though dreadful in its effects, suffered her to remain in that persuasion. She passed the night by his bed-side, devoting every moment of his disturbed repose to fervent prayers for his recovery.

CHAP. XIV.

FROM feverish and interrupted sleep, Montreville awoke unrefreshed; and the surgeon, when he repeated his visit, again alarmed Laura with representations of her father's danger, and assurances that nothing but the most vigilant attention to his quiet could preserve his life. The anguish with which Laura listened to this sentence she suppressed, lest it should injure her father. She never approached him but to bring comfort; she spoke to him cheerfully, while the tears forced themselves to her eyes; and smiled upon him while her heart was breaking. She felt what he must suffer, should the thought occur to him that he was about to leave her to the world, unfriended and alone; and she never mentioned his illness to him unless with the voice of hope. But of the danger which she strove to disguise, Montreville was fully sensible; and though he forbore to shock her by avowing it ex-

plicitly, he could not, like her, suppress his fears. He would sometimes fervently wish that he could see his child safe in the protection of Mrs Douglas; and sometimes, when Laura was bending over him in the tenderest sympathy, he would clasp her neck, and cry, with an agony that shook his whole frame, "What—Oh what will become of thee!"

He seemed anxious to know how long Mrs De Courcy was to remain in town, and inquired every hour whether Montague was not returned. Full well did Laura guess the mournful meaning of these questions. Full well did they remind her, that when the De Courcy family left London, she with her dying father would amidst this populous wilderness be alone. She anticipated the last scene of this sad tragedy; when, amidst busy thousands, a senseless corpse would be her sole companion. She looked forward to its close, when even this sad society would be withdrawn. Human fortitude could not support the prospect; and she would rush from her father's presence, to give vent to agonies of sorrow.

But the piety of Laura could half invest misfortune with the character of blessing; as the mists which rise to darken the evening sun are themselves tinged with his glory. She called to

mind the gracious assurance which marks the afflicted who suffer not by their own guilt or folly as the favoured of Heaven; and the more her earthly connections seemed dissolving, the more did she strive to acquaint herself with Him, from whose care no accident can sever. To this care she fervently committed her father; praying that no selfish indulgence of her grief might embitter his departure; and resolving by her fortitude to convince him that she was able to struggle with the storm from which he was no longer to shelter her.

The day succeeding that on which Montreville was taken ill, had been set apart for a farewell visit to Mrs De Courcy; and Laura's note of mournful apology, was answered by a kind visit from Harriet. Unconscious of the chief cause of her father's impatience for Montague's return, Laura wishing to be the bearer of intelligence which she knew would cheer him, inquired anxiously when Miss De Courcy expected her brother. But De Courcy's motions depended upon the spirits of his venerable friend, and Harriet knew not when he might be able to leave Mr Wentworth. It was even uncertain whether for the present he would return to town at all, as in another week Mrs De Courcy meant to set out

for Norwood. Laura softened this unpleasing news to her father; she did not name the particular time of Mrs De Courcy's departure, and she suffered him still confidently to expect the return of his favourite.

The next day brought a letter from De Courcy himself, full of affectionate solicitude for the Captain's health and spirits; but evidently written in ignorance of the fatal change which had taken place since his departure. In this letter the name of Laura was not mentioned, not even in a common compliment, and Montreville remarked to her this omission. "He has forgotten it." answered Laura,—"his warm heart is full of his friend's distress and yours, and has not room for mere ceremony." "I hope," said Montreville emphatically, "that is not the reason?" "What is then the reason?" inquired Laura; but Montreville did not speak, and she thought no more of De Courcy's little omission.

Her father, indeed, for the present, occupied almost all her earthly thoughts, and even her prayers rose more frequently for him than for herself. Except during the visits of the surgeon, she was Montreville's sole attendant; and, regardless of fatigue, she passed every night by his bed-side, every day in ministering to his comfort. If worn

out with watching, she dropt asleep, she started again at his slightest motion, and obstinately refused to seek in her own chamber a less interrupted repose. " No," thought she, " let my strength serve me while I have duties to perform, while yet my father lives to need my efforts; then may I be permitted to sink to early rest, and the weary labourer, while yet it is but morning, be called to receive his hire."

The desertion of Hargrave, whom she had loved with all the ardour of a warm heart and a fervid imagination, the death of her father so fast approaching, her separation from every living being with whom she could claim friendship or kindred, seemed signals for her to withdraw her affections from a world where she would soon have nothing left to love and to cherish. " And be it so," thought she,"—let me no longer grovel here in search of objects which earth has not to offer—objects fitted for unbounded and unchangeable regard. Nor let me peevishly reject what this world really has to give, the opportunity to prepare for a better. This it bestows even on me; and a few childish baubles are all else that it reserves for those who worship it with all their soul, and strength, and mind."

No mortal can exist without forming some

wish or hope. Laura *hoped* that she should live while she could be useful to her father; and she *wished* that she might not survive him. One only other wish she had, and that was for De Courcy's return; for Montreville, whose spirits more than shared his bodily languor, now seldom spoke, but to express his longing for the presence of his favourite. Laura continued to cheer him with a hope which she herself no longer felt; for now three days only remained ere Mrs De Courcy was to quit London. The departure of their friends Laura resolved to conceal from her father, that, believing them to be near, he might feel himself the less forlorn; and this she thought might be practicable, as he had never since his illness expressed any wish to quit his bed, or to see Miss De Courcy when she came.

In Montreville's darkened apartment, without occupation but in her cares for him, almost without rest, had Laura passed a week, when she was one morning summoned from her melancholy charge, to attend a visitor. She entered the parlour. "Mr De Courcy!" she exclaimed, springing joyfully to meet him, "thank Heaven you are come!" But not with equal warmth did De Courcy accost her. The repulsive look she had given him at parting was still fresh in

his recollection; and, with a respectful distant bow, he expressed his sorrow for Captain Montreville's illness. "Oh he is ill, indeed!" said Laura, the faint hectic of pleasure fading suddenly from her cheek. "Earnestly has he longed for your return; and we feared," said she, with a violent effort suppressing her tears, "we feared that you might not have come till—till all was over." "Surely Miss Montreville," said De Courcy, extremely shocked, "surely you are causelessly alarmed." "Oh no," cried Laura, "he cannot live!" and no longer able to contain her emotion, she burst into a passion of tears. Forced entirely from his guard by her grief, Montague threw himself on the seat by her. "Dearest of human beings," he exclaimed, "Oh that I could shield thee from every sorrow!" But absorbed in her distress, Laura heeded him not; and the next moment, sensible of his imprudence, he started from her side, and retreated to a distant part of the room.

As soon as she was again able to command herself, she went to inform her father of De Courcy's arrival. Though told with the gentlest caution, Montreville heard the news with extreme emotion. He grasped Laura's hand; and, with tears of joy streaming down his pale cheeks,

said,—" Heaven be praised! I shall not leave thee quite desolate." Laura herself felt less desolate; and she rejoiced even for herself, when she once more saw De Courcy seated beside her father.

It was only the morning before, that a letter from Harriet had informed her brother of Montreville's illness and of Laura's distress. To hear of that distress, and to remain at a distance was impossible; and Montague had left Mr Wentworth's within the hour. He had travelled all night; and, without even seeing his mother and sister, had come direct to Captain Montreville's lodgings. He was shocked at the death-like looks of Montreville, and still more so at those of Laura. Her eyes were sunk, her lips colourless, and her whole appearance indicated that she was worn out with fatigue and wretchedness. Yet De Courcy felt, that never in the bloom of health and beauty, had she been so dear to him, and scarcely could he forbear from addressing her in the accents of compassion and of love. Montreville wishing to speak with him alone, begged of Laura to leave him for a while to De Courcy's care, and endeavour to take some rest. She objected that Montague had himself need of rest, having travelled all night; but when he as-

sured her, that even if she drove him away he would not attempt to sleep, she consented to retire, and seek the repose of which she was so much in want.

When they were alone, Montreville shewed De Courcy the warning letter; and related to him the baseness of Warren, and the escape of Laura. Montague listened to him with intense interest. He often changed colour, and his lips quivered with emotion; and, when her father described the manner in which she had accomplished her escape, he exclaimed with enthusiasm, "Yes, she is superior to every weakness, as she is alive to every gentle feeling." Montreville then dwelt upon her unremitting care of him—on the fortitude with which she suppressed her sorrow, even while its violence was perceptibly injuring her health. "And is it to be wondered at," said he, "that I look forward with horror to leaving this lovely excellent creature in such a world, alone and friendless?" "She shall never be friendless," cried De Courcy. "My mother, my sister, shall be her friends, and I will"——. He stopped abruptly, and a heavy sigh burst from him.

Recovering himself, he resumed, "You must not talk so despondingly. You will long live, I trust, to enjoy the blessing of such a child."

Montreville shook his head, and remained silent. He was persuaded that De Courcy loved his daughter, and would fain have heard an explicit avowal that he did so. To have secured to her the protection of Montague would have destroyed the bitterness of death. Had Laura been the heiress of millions, he would have rejoiced to bestow her and them upon De Courcy. But he scorned to force him to a declaration, and respected her too much to make an approach towards offering her to any man's acceptance.

He was at a loss to imagine what reason withheld De Courcy from avowing an attachment which he was convinced that he felt. When he considered his favourite's grave reflecting character, he was rather inclined to believe that he was cautiously ascertaining the temper and habits of the woman with whom he meant to spend his life. But the warmth of approbation with which he mentioned Laura, seemed to indicate that his opinion of her was already fixed. It was possible, too, that De Courcy wished to secure an interest in her regard before he ventured formally to petition for it. Whatever was the cause of Montague's silence, the Captain anticipated the happiest consequences from his renewed intercourse with Laura; and he resolved that he

would not, by any indelicate interference, compel him to precipitate his declaration. He therefore changed the conversation, by inquiring when Mrs De Courcy was to leave town. Montague answered, that as he had not seen his mother since his return, he did not exactly know what time was fixed for her departure; "but," said he, "whenever she goes, I shall only attend her to Norwood, and return on the instant; nor will I quit you again, till you are much, much better, or till you will no longer suffer me to stay." Montreville received this promise with gratitude and joy; and De Courcy persuaded himself, that in making it, he was actuated chiefly by motives of friendship and humanity. He remained with Montreville till the day was far advanced, and then went to take a late dinner in Audley Street.

Next morning, and for several succeeding days, he returned, and spent the greatest part of his time in attending, comforting, and amusing the invalid. He prevailed on his mother to delay her departure, that he might not be obliged immediately to leave his charge. He soothed the little impatiences of disease; contrived means to mitigate the oppressiveness of debility; knew how to exhilarate the hour of ease: and watched

the moment, well known to the sickly, when amusement becomes fatigue.

Laura repaid these attentions to her father with gratitude unutterable. Often did she wish to thank De Courcy as he deserved; but she felt that her acknowledgments must fall far short of her feelings and of his deserts, if they were not made with a warmth, which to a man, and to a young man, she revolted from expressing. She imagined, too, that to one who sought for friendship, mere gratitude might be mortifying; and that it might wound the generous nature of Montague to be thanked as a benefactor, where he wished to be loved as an equal. She therefore did not speak of, or but slightly mentioned, her own and her father's obligations to him; but she strove to repay them in the way which would have been most acceptable to himself, by every mark of confidence and good will. Here no timidity restrained her; for no feeling which could excite timidity, at all mingled with her regard for De Courcy. But, confined to her own breast, her gratitude became the stronger; and if she had now had a heart to give, to Montague it would have been freely given.

Meanwhile the spirits of Montreville, lightened

of a heavy load, by the assurance that, even in case of his death, his daughter would have a friend to comfort and protect her, his health began to improve. He was able to rise; and one day, with the assistance of Montague's arm, surprised Laura with a visit in the parlour. The heart of Laura swelled with transport when she saw him once more occupy his accustomed seat in the family-room, and received him as one returned from the grave. She sat by him, holding his hand between her own, but did not try to speak. "If it would not make you jealous, Laura," said Montreville, "I should tell you that Mr De Courcy is a better nurse than you are. I have recruited wonderfully since he undertook the care of me. More indeed than I thought I should ever have done." Laura answered only by glancing upon De Courcy a look of heartfelt benevolence and pleasure. "And yet," said Montague, "it is alleged, that no attentions from our own sex are so effectual as those which we receive from the other. How cheaply would bodily suffering purchase the sympathy, the endearments of"—— the name of Laura rose to his lips, but he suppressed it, and changed the expression to "an amiable woman." "Is it indeed so?" cried Laura, raising her eyes

full of grateful tears to his face. "Oh then, if sickness or sorrow ever be your portion, may your kindness here be repaid by some spirit of peace in woman's form—some gentleness yet more feminine than De Courcy's!"

The enthusiasm of gratitude had hurried Laura into a warmth which the next moment covered her with confusion; and she withdrew her eyes from De Courcy's face before she had time to remark the effects of these, the first words of emotion that ever she had addressed to him. The transport excited by the ardour of her expressions, and the cordial approbation which they implied, instantly gave way to extreme mortification. "She wishes," thought he, "that some *woman* may repay me. She would then, not only with indifference, but with pleasure, see me united to another; resign me without a pang to some mere common-place insipid piece of sweetness; and give her noble self to one who could better feel her value."

De Courcy had never declared his preference for Laura; he was even determined not to declare it. Yet to find that she had not a wish to secure it for herself, gave him such acute vexation, that he was unable to remain in her presence. He abruptly rose and took his leave.

He soon however reproached himself with the unreasonableness of his feelings; and returned to his oft-repeated resolution to cultivate the friendship without aspiring to the love of Laura. He even persuaded himself that he rejoiced in her freedom from a passion which could not be gratified without a sacrifice of the most important duties. He had a sister for whom no provision had been made; a mother, worthy of his warmest affection, whose increasing infirmities required increased indulgence. Mrs De Courcy's jointure was a very small one: and though she consented for the present to share the comforts of his establishment, Montague knew her too well to imagine that she would accept of any addition to her income, deducted from the necessary expences of his wife and family. His generous nature revolted from suffering his sister to feel herself a mere pensioner on his bounty, or to seek dear-bought independence in a marriage of convenience, a sort of bargain upon which he looked with double aversion, since he had himself felt the power of an exclusive attachment.

Here even his sense of justice was concerned; for he knew that, if his father had lived, it was his intention to have saved from his income a provision for Harriet. From the time that the estate

devolved to Montague, he had begun to execute his father's intention; and he had resolved, that no selfish purpose should interfere with its fulfilment. The destined sum, however, was as yet little more than half collected, and it was now likely to accumulate still more slowly; for, as Mrs De Courcy had almost entirely lost the use of her limbs, a carriage was to her an absolute necessary of life.

Most joyfully would Montague have relinquished every luxury, undergone every privation, to secure the possession of Laura; but he would not sacrifice his mother's health nor his sister's independence to any selfish gratification; nor would he subject the woman of his choice to the endless embarrassments of a revenue too small for its purposes.

These reasons had determined him against addressing Laura. At their first interview he had been struck with her as the most lovely woman he had ever beheld: but he was in no fear that his affections should be entangled. They had escaped from a hundred lovely women, who had done their utmost to ensnare them, while she was evidently void of any such design. Besides, Montreville was his old friend, and it was quite necessary that he should visit him. Laura's manners

had charmed De Courcy as much as her person. Still might not a man be pleased and entertained, without being in love? Further acquaintance gradually laid open to him the great and amiable qualities of her mind, and was it not natural and proper to love virtue? but this was not being in love.

Symptoms at last grew so strong upon poor De Courcy, that he could no longer disguise them from himself; but it was pleasing to love excellence. He would never reveal his passion. It should be the secret joy of his heart; and why cast away a treasure which he might enjoy without injury to any? Laura's love indeed he could not seek; but her friendship he might cherish; and who would exchange the friendship of such a woman for the silly fondness of a thousand vulgar minds?

In this pursuit he had all the success which he could desire; for Laura treated him with undisguised regard; and with that regard he assured himself that he should be satisfied. At last this "secret joy," this "treasure of his heart," began to mingle pain with its pleasure; and, when called away on his mournful errand to Mr Wentworth, De Courcy confessed, that it was wise to wean himself a little from one whose presence

was becoming necessary to his happiness, and to put some restraint upon a passion, which from his toy was become his master. Short absence, however, had only increased his malady; and Laura in sorrow, Laura grateful, confiding, at times almost tender, seized at once upon every avenue to the heart of De Courcy: he revered her as the best, he admired her as the loveliest, he loved her as the most amiable of human beings. Still he resolved that, whatever it might cost him, he would refrain from all attempt to gain her love; and he began to draw nice distinctions between the *very* tender friendship with which he hoped to inspire her, and the tormenting passion which he must silently endure. Happily for the success of De Courcy's self-deceit, there was no rival at hand, with whose progress in Laura's regard he could measure his own, and he never thought of asking himself what would be his sensations if her *very tender* friendship for him should not exclude love for another.

A doubt would sometimes occur to him, as to the prudence of exposing himself to the unremitting influence of her charms, but it was quickly banished as an unwelcome intruder, or silenced with the plea, that, to withdraw himself from Montreville on a sick-bed, would outrage

friendship and humanity. He had, too, somewhat inadvertently, given his friend a promise that he would not leave him till his health was a little re-established; and this promise now served as the excuse for an indulgence which he had not resolution to forego. After escorting Mrs De Courcy to Norwood, he pleaded this promise to himself when he returned to London without an hour's delay; and it excused him in his own eyes for going every morning to the abode of Montreville, from whence he had seldom resolution enough to depart, till the return of night drove him away.

Meanwhile, with the health of her father, the spirits of Laura revived; and considering it as an act of the highest self-denial in a domestic man to quit his home—a literary man to suspend his studies—a young man to become stationary in the apartment of an invalid, she exerted herself to the utmost to cheer De Courcy's voluntary task. She sometimes relieved him in reading aloud, an accomplishment in which she excelled. Her pronunciation was correct, her voice varied, powerful and melodious, her conception rapid and accurate, while the expression of her countenance was an animated comment upon the author.

De Courcy delighted to hear her sing the wild airs of her native mountains, which she did with inimitable pathos, though without skill. Her conversation, sometimes literary, sometimes gay, was always simply intended to please. Yet, though void of all design to dazzle, it happened, she knew not how, that in De Courcy's company she was always more lively, more acute, than at other times. His remarks seemed to unlock new stores in her mind; and the train of thought which he introduced, she could always follow with peculiar ease and pleasure. Safe in her preference for another, she treated him with the most cordial frankness. Utterly unconscious of the sentiment she inspired, she yet had an animating confidence in De Courcy's good will; and sometimes pleased herself with thinking, that, next to his mother and sister, she stood highest of women in his regard. No arts of the most refined coquetry could have rivetted more closely the chains of the ill-fated De Courcy; and the gratitude of the unconscious Laura, pointed the shaft which gave the death-wound to his peace.

How was it possible for her to imagine, that the same sentiment could produce a demeanour so opposite as De Courcy's was from that of Hargrave. Hargrave had been accustomed to

speak of her personal charms with rapture. De Courcy had never made them the subject of direct compliment; he had even of late wholly discontinued those little gallantries which every pretty woman is accustomed to receive. Hargrave omitted no opportunity to plead his passion; and though the presence of a third person of necessity precluded this topic, it restrained him not from gazing upon Laura with an eagerness from which she shrunk abashed. De Courcy had never mentioned love; and Laura observed that, when his glance met her's, he would sometimes withdraw his eye with (as she thought) almost womanly modesty. In her private interviews with Hargrave, he had ever approached her with as much vehemence and freedom of speech and manner, as her calm dignity would permit. Privacy made no change in De Courcy's manner, except to render him a little more silent—a little more distant; and to personal familiarity, he seemed to be if possible more averse than herself; for if she accidentally touched him, he coloured and drew back.

Some of these circumstances Montreville had remarked, and had drawn from them inferences very different from those of his daughter. He was convinced that the preference of De Courcy

for Laura had risen into a passion, which, for some unknown reason, he wished to conceal; and he perceived, by the ease of her behaviour, that Montague's secret was unsuspected by her. Most anxiously did he wish to know the cause of his favourite's silence, and to discover whether it was likely to operate long. In Laura's absence, he sometimes led the conversation towards the subject; but De Courcy never improved the offered opportunity. Partly in the hope of inviting equal frankness, Montreville talked of his own situation, and mentioned the motive of his journey to London. Montague inquired into every particular of the business, and rested not till he had found Mr Baynard's executor, and received from him an acknowledgment, that he had in his possession a voucher for the payment of Montreville's fifteen hundred pounds to Warren.

He next, without mentioning the matter to Montreville, called upon Warren, with an intention finally to conclude the business; thinking it impossible that, since the payment of the money was ascertained, he could refuse either to pay the annuity, or refund the price of it. But the disdain of Laura yet rankled in the mind of Warren, and he positively refused to bring the affair to any conclusion, declaring, that he would litigate

it to the last sixpence he was worth: to which declaration he added an excellent joke concerning the union of Scotch pride with Scotch poverty. At this effrontery the honest blood of De Courcy boiled with indignation, and he was on the point of vowing, that he too would beggar himself, rather than permit such infamous oppression; but his mother, his sister, and Laura herself, rose to his mind, and he contented himself with threatening to expose Warren to the disgrace which he merited.

Warren now began to suspect that De Courcy was the cause of Laura's contemptuous reception of his addresses, and, enraged at his interference, yet overawed by his manly appearance and decided manner, became sullen, and refused to answer Montague's expostulations. Nothing remained to be done, and De Courcy was obliged to communicate to Montreville the ill success of his negociations.

Bereft of all hopes of obtaining justice, which he had not the means to enforce, Montreville became more anxiously desirous to regain such a degree of health as might enable him to return home. In his present state, the journey was impracticable; and he was convinced, that while he remained pent up in the polluted air of the

city, his recovery could advance but slowly. Some weeks must at all events elapse before he could be in a condition to travel; and to accommodate his funds to this prolonged demand upon them, he saw that he must have recourse to some scheme of economy yet more humble than that which he had adopted.

He hoped, if he could recover strength sufficient for the search, to find in the suburbs some abode of purer air, and still more moderate expence than his present habitation. The former only of these motives he mentioned to De Courcy; for though Montreville did not affect to be rich, he never spoke of his poverty. Various circumstances, however, had led De Courcy to guess at his friend's pecuniary embarrassments; and he too had a motive which he did not avow, in the offer which he made to seek a more healthful residence for Montreville.

Unwilling to describe the humble accommodation with which he meant to content himself, or the limited price which he could afford to offer for it, Montreville at first refused De Courcy's services; but they were pressed upon him with such warmth, that he was obliged to submit, and Montague lost no time in fulfilling his commission.

He soon discovered a situation which promised comfort. It was in the outskirts of the town, a small flower-garden belonged to the house, the apartments were airy and commodious, the furniture was handsome, and the whole most finically neat. The rent, however, exceeded that of Montreville's present lodgings; and De Courcy knew that this objection would be insurmountable. That Laura should submit to the inelegancies of a mean habitation, was what he could not bear to think of; and he determined, by a friendly little artifice, to reconcile Montreville's comfort with his economy. The surgeon had named two or three weeks as the time likely to elapse before Montreville could commence his journey. De Courcy paid in advance above half the rent of the apartments for a month, charging the landlady to keep the real rent a secret from her lodgers.

As far as the author of these memoirs has been able to learn, this was the only artifice which ever Montague De Courcy practised in his life; and it led, as artifices are wont to do, to consequences which the contriver neither wished nor foresaw.

Much to his satisfaction, Montreville was soon settled in his new abode, where De Courcy con-

tinued to be his daily visitor. A certain delicacy prevented Laura from endeavouring to procure a reversal of her father's decree, issued in a moment of peevishness, that she should paint no more with a view to pecuniary reward. She felt that he had been wrong, and she shrunk from reminding him of it, till her labours should again become necessary. But, desirous of conveying to Mrs De Courcy some token of her remembrance and gratitude, she employed some of the hours which Montague spent with her father, in labouring a picture which she intended to send to Norwood. The subject was the choice of Hercules; and to make her gift the more acceptable, she presented in the hero a picture of De Courcy, while the form and countenance of Virtue were copied from the simple majesty of her own. The figure of Pleasure was a fancied one, and it cost the fair artist unspeakable labour. She could not pourtray what she would have shrunk from beholding—a female voluptuary. Her draperies were always designed with the most chastened decency: and, after all her toil, even the form of Pleasure came sober and matronly from the hand of Laura.

Designing a little surprise for her friends, she had never mentioned this picture to De Courcy;

and as she daily stole some of the hours of his visit to bestow upon it, it advanced rapidly. Montague bore these absences with impatience; but Montreville, who knew how Laura was employed, took no notice of them, and De Courcy durst not complain.

Three weeks had glided away since Montreville's removal to his new lodgings, and he remained as much as ever anxious, and as much as ever unable to guess De Courcy's reason for concealing a passion which evidently increased every day. He recollected that Montague had of late never met Laura but in his presence, and he thought it natural that the lover should wish to make his first application to his mistress herself. He had an idea, that the picture might be made to assist the denouement which he so ardently desired; and with this view he privately gave orders that when next Mr De Courcy came he should be ushered into the painting-room, which he knew would be empty, as Laura never quitted him till De Courcy arrived to take her place.

Next morning accordingly Montague was shewn into the room which he had himself destined for Laura, and, for that reason, supplied with many little luxuries which belonged not to its original furniture. He looked round with

delight on the marks of her recent presence. There lay her book open as she had quitted it, and the pencil with which she had marked the margin. It was one which he himself had recommended, and he thought it should ever be dear to him. On a table lay her port-folio and drawing materials; in a corner stood her easel with the picture, over which was thrown a shawl which he had seen her wear.

Not conceiving that she could have any desire to conceal her work, he approached it, and raising the covering, stood for a moment motionless with surprise. The next, a thousand sensations, vague but delightful, darted through his mind; but before he could give shape or distinctness to any one of them, the step approached which ever roused De Courcy to eager expectation, and letting the shawl drop, he flew towards the door to receive Laura.

With rapture in his eyes, but confusion on his tongue, De Courcy paid his compliments, and again turned towards the picture. Laura sprung forward to prevent him from raising the covering. "Is this forbidden, then?" said he. "Oh yes, indeed," said Laura, blushing, "you must not look at it." "Can you be so mischievous," cried De Courcy, a delighted smile playing on his

countenance, " as to refuse me such a pleasure?" " I am sure," said Laura, blushing again, and still more deeply, " it could give you no pleasure in its present state." " And I am sure," said De Courcy, ardently, " it would give me more than I have language to express."

De Courcy's eagerness, and the consciousness of her own confusion, made Laura now more unwilling that Montague should discover the cause of both to be his own portrait, and actually trembling with emotion, she said, putting her hand on the shawl to prevent him from raising it, " Indeed I cannot shew you this. There is my portfolio—look at any thing but this." " And what inference may I draw as to the subject of a picture which Miss Montreville will not shew to the most partial—the most devoted of her friends?" " Any inference," replied Laura, still holding the shawl, " which friendship or charity will permit." " And must I not remove this perverse little hand?" said De Courcy, laying his upon it; for all prudence was forgotten in his present emotion. Laura, a little offended at his perseverance, gravely withdrew her hand, and turned away, saying, " Since my wishes have no power, I shall make no other trial of strength." " No power!" cried De Courcy, following her, " they have more force

than a thousand arms." "Well," said Laura, a little surprised by his manner, but turning upon him a smile of gracious reconciliation, "your forbearance may hereafter be rewarded by a sight of this important picture; but lest you should forfeit your recompense, had we not better remove from temptation?"

She then led the way to the parlour, and De Courcy followed her in a state of agitation which could not be concealed. He was absent and restless. He often changed colour, seemed scarcely sensible of what was addressed to him, or began to reply, and the unfinished sentence died upon his lips. At last, starting up, he pleaded sudden indisposition, and was hurrying away. "Do not go away ill and alone," said Laura, kindly detaining him. "Walk round the garden—the fresh air will relieve you." "No air will relieve me!" said De Courcy, in a voice of wretchedness. "What then can we do for you?" said Laura, with affectionate earnestness. "What can *you* do for me!" cried De Courcy, "Oh nothing, nothing but suffer me to go, while yet I have the power." He then wrung Montreville's hand, and uttering something which his emotion made inarticulate, without venturing a glance to-

wards Laura, he quitted the house, and returned home in a state bordering on distraction.

He shut himself up in his chamber to consider of his situation, if that can be called consideration, which was but a conflict of tumultuous feeling. That Laura should have painted his portrait in a group where it held such a relation to her own; that she should keep it concealed in an apartment exclusively appropriated to herself; her alarm lest he should examine it; her confusion, which had at last risen to the most distressing height, from the idea of what De Courcy might infer, should he discover that his own portrait was the cause of so many blushes; the confiding affectionate manner in which she treated him;—all conspired to mislead De Courcy. He felt a conviction that he was beloved, and, in spite of himself, the thought was rapture.

But what availed this discovery? Could he forget the justice of his sister's claims, sacrifice to his selfish wishes the comfort of his mother, or wed his half-worshipped Laura to the distresses of an embarrassed fortune? "Oh no," he cried, "let not my passions involve in disaster all whom I love."

Or could he lay open to Laura his feelings and

his situation, and sue for her love, even while their union must be delayed. Her attachment, he thought, was yet in its infancy, born of gratitude, fostered by separation from other society, and, for the present, pleasing in its sensations, and transient in its nature. But he thought her capable of a love as fervent—as deep-rooted as that which she inspired; and should he wilfully awaken in her peaceful breast the cravings of such a passion as tortured his own; see her spirits, her vigour of mind, her usefulness, perhaps her health, give way to the sickness of "hope deferred!" No,—rather let her return to the indifference in which he found her. Or, should he shackle her with a promise, of which honour might extort a reluctant fulfilment, after the affection which prompted it was perhaps withdrawn from him? Or, should he linger on from day to day in vain endeavours to conceal his affection, dishonourably sporting with the tenderness of the woman he loved, his ill-suppressed feelings every hour offering a hope which must every hour be disappointed? No! the generous heart of De Courcy would sooner have suffered a thousand deaths.

But could he return—could he see again this creature, now more than ever dear to him, and

stifle the fondness—the anguish which would rend his bosom at parting? Impossible! He would see her no more. He would tear at once from his heart every hope—every joy—and dare at once all the wretchedness which awaited him. In an agony of desperation, he rung for his servant, ordered his horses, and in an hour was on his way to Norwood, with feelings which the criminal on the rack need not have envied.

CHAP. XV.

THE next morning, while Montreville and his daughter were expecting with some anxiety the arrival of their daily visitor, a note was brought which De Courcy had left in Audley Street, to be delivered after his departure. Though nearly illegible from the agitation in which it was written, it contained nothing but the simple information, that he had been suddenly obliged to leave London. It assigned no reason for his journey—it fixed no period for his absence; and Montreville endeavoured to hope that his return would not be distant. But day after day passed heavily on, and De Courcy came not. Montreville again began to feel himself a solitary deserted being; again became dejected; again became the victim of real debility and fancied disease.

All Laura's endeavours failed to animate him to cheerfulness, or rouse him to employment. If he permitted her to remain by him, he seemed

rather to endure than to enjoy her presence, repressed with a languid monosyllable her attempts at conversation, or passed whole hours in listless silence. Laura, who foreboded the worst consequences from the indulgence of this depression, endeavoured to persuade him that he might now safely attempt a voyage to Scotland, and predicted beneficial effects from the sea air. But Montreville answered her with displeasure, that such an exertion would certainly destroy him, and that those who were themselves in high health and spirits, could not judge of the feelings, nor sympathize with the weakness of disease. The reproach had no more justice than is usual with the upbraidings of the sickly; for Laura's spirits shared every turn of her father's, though her stronger mind could support with grace the burden that weighed his to the earth. She desisted, however, from a subject which she saw that, for the present, he would not bear, and confined her endeavours to persuading him to undertake some light occupation, or to walk in the little garden which belonged to the house. But, even in these attempts she was commonly defeated; for Montreville would make no exertion, and the winter wind, now keen and biting, pierced through his wasted form.

None but they who have made the melancholy experiment, can tell how cheerless is the labour of supporting the spirit that will make no effort to sustain itself, of soliciting the languid smile, offering the rejected amusement, or striving, with vain ingenuity, to enliven the oft-repulsed conversation. They only know who have tried it, what it is to resist contagious depression—to struggle against the effects of the complaining voice, the languid motion, the hopeless aspect; what it is to suppress the sympathetic sigh, and restrain the little sally of impatience, so natural to those whose labours are incessant, yet unavailing. Such were the tasks which Laura voluntarily prescribed to herself. Incited by affection, and by strong sense of duty, she soothed the fretful humour, prompted the reluctant exertion, fanned the expiring hope, and seized the favourable moment to soften by feminine tenderness, or exhilarate by youthful gaiety.

Many motives may lead to one great effort of virtue. The hope of reward, the desire of approbation, a sense of right, the natural benevolence which still affords a faint trait of the image in which man was made—all, or any of these, may produce single, or even oft-repeated acts deserving of praise; but one principle alone can

lead to virtuous exertions, persevering and unremitting though without success. That principle was Laura's; and even while her endeavours seemed unavailing, she was content to employ all her powers in the task selected for her by the bestower of them.

Montreville often reproached himself for the untimely burden which he was laying on the young heart of his daughter; but he could make no effort to lighten it, and self-reproach served only to embitter the spirit which it failed of stimulating to exertion. Fretful and impatient, yet conscious of his injustice, and unwilling that Laura should observe it, he would often dismiss her from her attendance, and spend whole hours in solitary gloom. These hours Laura devoted to her picture, stealing between whiles, on tiptoe, to the door of her father's apartment, to listen whether he was stirring; and sometimes venturing to knock gently for admittance.

The picture, which was far advanced when De Courcy left town, soon received the finishing touches; and Laura lost no time in transmitting it to Norwood. She wrote an affectionate letter to Harriet; in which, after thanking her for all her kindness, she offered her gift, and added, that to give her work a value which it would

not otherwise have possessed, she had introduced the portrait of De Courcy; and that, glad of an opportunity of associating the remembrance of herself with an object of interest, she had admitted her own resemblance into the group. She apologized for the appearance of conceit which might attend her exhibiting her own form under the character of Virtue, by relating, with characteristic simplicity, that she had determined on her subject, chosen and half-finished her Hercules, before she designed the figures of his companions; that she had afterwards thought that her memorial would be more effectual if it contained the portrait of the giver. "And you know," added she "it would have been impossible to mould my solemn countenance into the lineaments of Pleasure."

In the singleness of her heart, it never occurred to Laura, that any thing in the mutual relation of the figures of her piece stood in need of explanation. Had Hargrave furnished the model for her hero, she would probably have been a little more quick-sighted. As it was, she felt impatient to shew the De Courcy family, not excepting Montague himself, that she was not forgetful of their kindness; and she chose a day, when the influence of bright sunshine a little revived the spirits

of Montreville, to leave him for an hour, and accompany the picture to the shop of the obliging print-seller, that it might be packed more skilfully than by herself.

After seeing it safely put up, she gave the address to Wilkins, who immediately exclaimed, " So, Ma'am, you have found out the secret which you would not let me tell you?" "What secret?" inquired Laura.. "The name of the gentleman, Ma'am, who bought your pictures." "Was it De Courcy, then?" "Yes, Ma'am;—though to be sure it might'n't be the same. But I suppose you'll know him, Ma'am. A tall pleasant-looking gentleman, Ma'am. The pictures were sent home to Audley Street." " Laura's countenance brightened with satisfaction, and she suffered her informer to proceed. "I am sure," continued he, "I managed that business to the very best of my power, and, as one may say, very dexterously." "Was there any occasion for management?" inquired Laura. "Oh yes, Ma'am; for when he seemed very much taken with the first one, then I told him all about you just as I had it all from Mrs Dawkins, and how you were so anxious to have it sold; and then he said he'd have it, and paid the money into my hands; and then I told him how you looked the first day you brought it

here, and that you were just ready to cry about it; and then he said he must have a companion to it.

The flush both of pride and vexation for once stained the transparent skin of Laura. Yet it was only for a moment; and her next feeling was pleasure at the confirmation of the benevolent character with which her imagination had invested De Courcy. He had purchased her work when she was quite unknown to him, only, as she thought, from a wish to reward industry; and because he had been led to believe that the price was an object to the artist. Had another been the purchaser, she might have allowed something for the merit of the piece; but Laura was not yet cured of first imagining characters, and then bending facts to suit her theory. Sooner than bate one iota from De Courcy's benevolence, she would have assigned to her picture the rank of a sign-post.

She now remembered, that in her visits to Audley Street she had never seen her works; and in her approbation of the delicacy which prompted De Courcy to conceal that she was known to him as an artist, she forgot the little prejudice which this concealment implied. De Courcy, indeed, was himself unconscious that he entertained

any such prejudice. He applauded Laura's exertions; he approved of the spirit which led a young woman of family to dare, in spite of custom, to be useful. Yet he could not help acting as if she had shared the opinion of the world, and been herself ashamed of her labours. But this was a shame which Laura knew not. She wished not indeed to intrude on the world's notice. Her choice was peaceful obscurity. But, if she must be known, she would have far preferred the distinction earned by ingenious industry, to the notoriety which wealth and luxury can purchase.

On her return home, she found her father reading a letter which he had just received from De Courcy. It seemed written in an hour of melancholy. The writer made no mention of returning to town; on the contrary, he expressed a hope that Montreville might now be able to undertake a journey to Scotland. He besought the Captain to remember him, to speak of him often, and to write to him sometimes; and ended with these words— "Farewell, my friend; the dearest of my earthly hopes is, that we may one day meet again, though years, long years, must first intervene."

"So ends my last hope," said Montreville, let-

ting his head sink mournfully on his breast; "De Courcy comes not, and thou must be left alone and unprotected."

"The protection of so young a man," said Laura, avoiding to answer to a foreboding which she considered merely as a symptom of her father's disease, "might not perhaps have appeared advantageous to me in the eyes of those who are unacquainted with Mr De Courcy."

"It would have given comfort to my dying hour," said Montreville, "to consign thee to such a guardian—such a husband."

"A husband!" cried Laura, starting and turning pale. "Heaven be praised, that Mr De Courcy never harboured such a thought!"

Montreville looked up in extreme surprise, and inquired the reason of her thankfulness. "Oh, Sir," she replied, "we owe so much to Mr De Courcy's friendship, that I should have hated myself for being unable to return his affection;—and pity would it have been that the love of so amiable a being should have been bestowed in vain."

Montreville fixed his eyes upon her, as if to seek for farther explanation, and continued to gaze on her face, when his thoughts had wandered from the examination of it. After some

minutes of silence, he said—" Laura, you once rejected an alliance, splendid beyond my hopes, almost beyond my wishes, and that with a man formed to be the darling of your sex; and now you speak as if even Montague De Courcy would have failed to gain you. Tell me, then, have you any secret attachment? Speak candidly, Laura;—you will not always have a father to confide in."

Deep crimson dyed the cheeks of Laura; but, with the hesitation of a moment, she replied—" No, Sir, I have no wish to marry. I pretend not to lay open my whole heart to you; but I may with truth assure you, that there is not at this moment a man in being with whom I would unite myself. I know you would not be gratified by extorted confidence."

" No, Laura," said Montreville, " I ask no more than you willingly avow. I confide, as I have always done, in your prudence and integrity. Soon, alas! you will have no other guides. But it was my heart's wish to see you united to a man who could value and protect your worth—of late, more especially, when I feel that I so soon must leave you."

" My dearest father," said Laura, throwing her arm affectionately round his neck, " do not give

way to such gloomy forebodings. Your spirits are oppressed by confinement—let us but see Glenalbert again, and all will be well."

"I shall never see Glenalbert," said Montreville;—"and left alone in such a place as this, without money, without friends, without a home;—where shall my child find safety or shelter?"

"Indeed, Sir," said Laura, though a cold shuddering seized her, "your fears have no foundation. Only yesterday Dr Flint told me that your complaints were without danger, and that a little exercise would make you quite strong again."

Montreville shook his head. "Dr Flint deceives you, Laura," said he;—"you deceive yourself."

"No, indeed," said Laura, though she trembled; "you look much better,—you are much better. It is only these melancholy thoughts which retard your recovery. Trust yourself—trust me to the Providence that has hitherto watched over us."

"I could die without alarm," said Montreville; "but to leave thee alone and in want—Oh! I cannot bear it."

"Should the worst befal," said Laura, turning pale as alabaster, "think that I shall not be alone,

I shall not want, for"—her voice failed, but she raised her eyes with an expression which filled up the ennobling sentiment.

" I believe it, my love," said Montreville, " but you feel these consolations more strongly than I do. Leave me for the present; I am fatigued with speaking, and wish to be alone."

Laura retired to her own room, and endeavoured herself to practise the trust which she recommended to her father. Her meditations were interrupted by the entrance of her landlady, Mrs Stubbs, who, with many courtesies and apologies, said that she was come to present her account. Laura, who always had pleasure in cancelling a debt the moment it was incurred, and who conceived no apology to be necessary from those who came to demand only their own, received her landlady very graciously, and begged her to be seated, while she went to bring her father's purse. Mrs Stubbs spread her bills upon the table; and Laura, after examining them, was obliged to ask an explanation.

" Why, Ma'am," returned the landlady, " there are fourteen guineas for lodgings for six weeks, and L. 10, 15s. for victuals and other articles which I have furnished. I am sure I have kept an exact account."

" I understood," said Laura, " that we were to have the lodgings for a guinea and a half a-week, and"—

" A guinea and a half!" cried the landlady, colouring with wrath at this disparagement of her property. " Sure, Miss, you did not think to have lodgings such as these for a guinea and a half a-week. No, no—these lodgings have never been let for less than four guineas, and never shall as long as my name is Bridget.

Laura mildly pleaded her ignorance of those matters, and urged De Courcy's information as an excuse for her mistake. " To be sure, Ma'am, said the now pacified Mrs Stubbs, " nobody that know'd any thing of the matter, would expect to have such rooms for less than four guineas; and that was what the gentleman said when he took them; so he paid me two guineas and a half advance for four weeks, and charged me not to let you know of it; but I can't abide them secret doings; and, besides, if I take only a guinea and a half from you, where was I to look for the rest of my rent for the last fortnight—for the young gentleman seems to have taken himself off?"

Laura suffered her loquacious hostess to prodeed without interruption, for her thoughts were fully occupied. She had incurred a debt greater,

by five guineas, than she had been prepared to expect; and this sum was, in her present circumstances, of great importance. Yet her predominant feeling was grateful approbation of De Courcy's benevolence; nor did her heart at all upbraid him with the consequences of his well-meant deception. "Kind, considerate De Courcy," thought she; "he had hoped that, ere now, we should have ceased to need his generosity, and even have been removed from the possibility of discovering it."

Recollecting herself, she paid the landlady her full demand; and, dismissing her, sat down to examine what remained of her finances. All that she possessed, she found amounted to no more than one guinea and a few shillings; and, dropping the money into her lap, she sat gazing on it in blank dismay.

The poverty, whose approach she had so long contemplated with a fearful eye, had now suddenly overtaken her. Husbanded with whatever care, the sum before her could minister only to the wants of a few hours. In her present habitation, it would scarcely purchase shelter for another night from the storm which a keen winter-wind was beginning to drive against her window. An immediate supply then was necessary; but

where could that supply be found? It was too late to resort to the earnings of her own genius. Painting was a work of time and labour. No hasty production was likely to find favour amidst the competition of studied excellence. Even the highest effort of her art might long wait a purchaser; and tears fell from the eyes of Laura while she reflected that, even if she could again produce a Leonidas, she might never again find a De Courcy.

To borrow money on her father's half-pay, was an expedient which Laura had always rejected, as calculated to load their scanty income with a burden which it could neither shake off nor bear. But even to this expedient she could now no longer have recourse; for Montreville had assured her, that, in his present state of health, it would be impossible to mortgage his annuity for a single guinea.

She might raise a small supply by stripping her beloved Glenalbert of some of its little luxuries and comforts; but, long before this revolting business could be transacted, she must be absolutely pennyless. Nor did she dare, without consulting her father, to give orders for dismantling his home. And how should she inform him of the necessity for such a sacrifice? Weakened

both in body and in mind, how would he endure the privations that attend on real penury? His naturally feeble spirits already crushed to the earth, his kindly temper already, by anxiety and disappointment, turned to gall, his anxieties for his child alarmed even to anguish, how could he bear to learn that real want had reached him—had reached that dear child, the dread of leaving whom to poverty was poisoning the springs of life within him! "He thinks he is about to leave me," cried she, "and shall I tell him that I must owe to charity even the sod that covers him from me? No; I will perish first;" and, starting from her seat, she paced the room in distressful meditation on the means of concealing from her father the extent of their calamity.

She determined to take upon herself the care of their little fund, under pretence that the trouble was too great for Montreville. He had of late shewn such listless indifference to all domestic concerns, that she hoped he might never inquire into the extent of his landlady's demand, or that his inquiries might be eluded. It seemed a light thing in Laura's eyes to suffer alone; or rather she thought not of her own sufferings, could she but spare to her father the anguish of knowing himself and his child utterly destitute. She judg-

ed of his feelings by her own ; felt, by sympathy, all the pangs with which he would witness wants which he could not supply; and she inwardly vowed to conceal from him every privation that she might endure,—every labour that she might undergo.

But, void of every resource, far from every friend, destitute amid boundless wealth, alone amid countless multitudes, whither should she turn for aid, or even for counsel ? "Whither," cried she, dropping on her knees, "except to Him who hath supplied me in yet more urgent want, who hath counselled me in yet more fearful difficulty, who hath fed my soul with angels' food, and guided it with light from heaven." Laura rose from her devotions, more confiding in the care of Providence, more able to consider calmly of improving the means which still remained within her own power.

Before she could finish and dispose of a picture, weeks must elapse for which she could make no provision. To painting, therefore, she could not have immediate recourse. But sketches in chalk could be finished with expedition ; the print-seller might undertake the sale of them ; and the lowness of the price might invite purchasers. Could she but hope to obtain a subsistence

for her father, she would labour night and day, deprive herself of recreation, of rest, even of daily food, rather than wound his heart, by an acquaintance with poverty. "And since his pride is hurt by the labours of his child," said she, "even his pride shall be sacred. He shall never know my labours." And,—so frail are even the best!—an emotion of pride swelled the bosom of Laura at the thought that the merit of her toils was enhanced by their secrecy.

The resolutions of Laura were ever the immediate prelude to action; and here was no time for delay. She again looked mournfully upon her little treasure, hopelessly re-examined the purse that contained it; again, with dismay, remembered that it was her all; then, hastily putting it into her pocket, she drew her portfolio towards her, and began to prepare for her work with the hurry of one to whom every moment seems precious. Invention was at present impossible; but she tried to recollect one of her former designs, and busied herself in sketching it till the hour of dinner arrived. She then went to summon her father from his chamber to the eating-room. "This day," thought she, "I must share his precarious sustenance—hereafter I shall be

more provident. And is this then, perhaps, our last social meal?" and she turned for a moment from the door, to suppress the emotion which would have choked her utterance. "Come in, my dear," cried Montreville, who had heard her foot-step; and Laura entered with a smile. She offered her arm to assist him in descending to the parlour. "Why will you always urge me to go down stairs, Laura," said he; "you see I am unequal to the fatigue." "I shall not urge you to-morrow," answered Laura; and Montreville thought the tears which stood in her eyes, were the consequence of the impatient tone in which he had spoken.

During the evening, Laura avoided all mention of restoring the purse to her father, and he appeared to have forgotten its existence. But, by no effort could she beguile those cheerless hours. Her utmost exertions were necessary to maintain the appearance of composure; and De Courcy's letter seemed to have consummated Montreville's feelings of solitude and desolation. Wilfully, and without effort, he suffered his spirits to expire. His whole train of thinking had become habitually gloomy. He was wretched, even without reference to his situation, and the original cause of his melancholy was rather the excuse

than the reason of his depression. But this only rendered more hopeless all attempts to cheer him; for the woes of the imagination have this dire pre-eminence over such as spring from real evils, that, while these can warm at times in benevolent joy, or even brighten for a moment to the flash of innocent gaiety, the selfishness of the former, chequered by no kindly feeling, reflects not the sunny smile; as the dark and noisome fog drinks in vain the beam of Heaven.

Montreville, when in health, had been always and justly thought a kind-hearted, good-natured man. He had been a most indulgent husband, an easy master, and a fond father. He was honourable, generous, and friendly. Those who had witnessed his patient endurance of Lady Harriet's caprice had given his philosophy a credit which was better due to his indolence: for the grand defect of Montreville's character was a total want of fortitude and self-command; and of these failings he was now paying the penalty. His health was injured by his voluntary inaction, his fancy aggravated his real disorder, and multiplied to infinity his imaginary ailments. He had habituated his mind to images of disaster, till it had become incapable of receiving any but comfortless and doleful impressions.

After spending a few silent hours without effort towards employment or recreation, he retired for the night; and Laura experienced a sensation of relief, as, shutting herself into her apartment, she prepared to resume her labours. After every other member of the family had retired to rest, she continued to work till her candle expired in the socket; and then threw herself on her bed to rise again with the first blush of dawn.

Montreville had been accustomed to breakfast in his own room; Laura therefore found no difficulty in beginning her system of abstemiousness, Hastily swallowing a few mouthfuls of dry bread. she continued her drawing, till her father rung for his chocolate. She was fully resolved to adhere to this plan, to labour with unceasing industry, and to deny herself whatever was not essential to her existence.

But neither hard fare, nor labour, nor confinement, could occasion to Laura such pain as she suffered from another of the necessities of her situation. Amidst her mournful reflections, it had occurred to her, that unless she would incur a debt which she could not hope to discharge, it would be necessary to dismiss the surgeon who attended her father. All her ideas of honour and integrity revolted from suffering a man to expend his time

and trouble, in expectation of a return which she was unable to make. She was besides convinced that in Montreville's case medicine could be of no avail. But she feared to hint the subject to her father, lest it should lead to a discovery of their present circumstances; and such was her conviction of the feebleness of his spirits, and such her dread of the consequences of their increased depression, that all earthly evils seemed light compared with that of adding to his distress. Laura perhaps judged wrong; for one real evil sometimes ameliorates the condition, by putting to flight a host of imaginary calamities, and by compelling that exertion which makes any situation tolerable. But she trembled for the effects of the slightest additional suffering upon the life or the reason of her father; and she would have thought it little less than parricide to add a new bruise to the wounded spirit. On the other hand, she dreaded that Montreville, if kept in ignorance of its real cause, might consider the desertion of his medical attendant as an intimation that his case was hopeless, and perhaps become the victim of his imaginary danger.

She knew not on what to resolve. Her distress and perplexity were extreme; and if any thing could have vanquished the stubborn integri-

ty of Laura, the present temptation would have prevailed. But no wilful fraud could be the issue of her deliberations, who was steadily convinced that inflexible justice looks on to blast with a curse even the successful schemes of villany, and to shed a blessing on the sorrows of the upright. She would not even for her father incur a debt which she could never hope to pay; and nothing remained but to consider of the best means of executing her painful determination.

Here a new difficulty occurred, for she could not decline the surgeon's further attendance without offering to discharge what she already owed. In the present state of her funds, this was utterly impossible; for though, at her instigation, his bill had been lately paid, she was sure that the new one must already amount to more than all she possessed. How to procure the necessary supply she knew not; for even if she could have secured the immediate sale of her drawings, the price of her daily and nightly toil would scarcely suffice to pay for the expensive habitation which she durst not propose to leave, and to bribe the fastidious appetite of Montreville with dainties of which he could neither bear the want nor feel the enjoyment.

Once only, and it was but for a moment, she

thought of appealing to the humanity of Dr Flint, of unfolding to him her situation, and begging his attendance upon the chance of future remuneration. But Laura was destined once more to pay the penalty of her hasty judgments of character. On Montreville's first illness, Dr Flint had informed Laura, with (as she thought) great want of feeling, of her father's danger. He was a gaunt, atrabilious, stern-looking man, with a rough voice, and cold repulsive manners. He had, moreover, an uninviting name; and though Laura was ashamed to confess to herself that such trifles could influence her judgment, these disadvantages were the real cause why she always met Dr Flint with a sensation resembling that with which one encounters a cold, damp, north-east wind. To make any claim upon the benevolence of a stranger—and such a stranger! It was not to be thought of. Yet Laura's opinion, or rather her feelings, wronged Dr Flint. His exterior, it is true, was far from prepossessing. It is also true, that, considering Montreville's first illness as the effect of a very unpardonable levity on the part of Laura, he had spoken to her on that occasion with even more than his usual frigidity. Nor did he either possess or lay claim to any great share of sensibility; but he was not desti-

tute of humanity; and had Laura explained to him her situation, he would willingly have attended her father without prospect of recompence. But Laura did not put his benevolence to the test. She suffered him to make his morning visit and depart; while she was considering of a plan which appeared little less revolting.

Laura knew that one of the most elegant houses in Grosvenor Street was inhabited by a Lady Pelham, the daughter of Lady Harriet Montreville's mother by a former marriage. She knew that, for many years, little intercourse had subsisted between the sisters; and that her father was even wholly unknown to Lady Pelham. But she was ignorant, that the imprudence of her mother's marriage served as the excuse for a coldness, which had really existed before it had any such pretext.

With all her Scotish prejudice in favour of the claims of kindred (and Laura in this and many other respects was entirely a Scotch woman), she could not, without the utmost repugnance, think of applying to her relation. To introduce herself to a stranger whom she had never seen—to appear not only as an inferior, but as a suppli-cant—a beggar!—Laura had long and succesfully combated the innate pride of human nature:

but her humility almost failed under this trial. Her illustrious ancestry—the dignity of a gentlewoman—the independence of one who can bear to labour and endure to want, all rose successively to her mind; for pride can wear many specious forms. But she had nearer claims than the honour of her ancestry—dearer concerns than her personal importance; and when she thought of her father, she felt that she was no longer independent.

Severe was her struggle, and bitter were the tears which she shed over the conviction that it was right for her to become a petitioner for the bounty of a stranger. In vain did she repeat to herself, that she was a debtor to the care of Providence for her daily bread, and was not entitled to choose the means by which it was supplied. She could not conquer her reluctance. But she could act right in defiance of it. She could sacrifice her own feelings to the comfort of her father—to a sense of duty. Nay, upon reflection, she could rejoice that circumstances compelled her to quell that proud spirit with which, as a Christian, she maintained a constant and vigorous combat.

While these thoughts were passing in her mind, she had finished her drawing; and, impatient to

know how far this sort of labour was likely to be profitable, she furnished her father with a book to amuse him in her absence; and, for the first time since they had occupied their present lodgings, expressed a wish to take a walk for amusement, Had Montreville observed the blushes that accompanied this little subterfuge, he would certainly have suspected that the amusement which this walk promised was of no common kind; but he was in one of his reveries, hanging over the mantle-piece, with his forehead resting on his arm, and did not even look up while he desired her not to be long absent.

She resolved to go first to Lady Pelham, that coming early she might find her disengaged, and afterwards to proceed to the print-shop.

The wind blew keen across the snow as Laura began her reluctant pilgrimage. Her summer attire, to which her finances could afford no addition, ill defended her from the blast. Through the streets of London she was to explore her way unattended. Accustomed to find both safety and pleasure in the solitude of her walks, she was to mix in the throngs of a rude rabble, without protection from insult. But no outward circumstances could add to the feelings of comfortless dismay with which she looked forward to

the moment, when, ushered through stately apartments into the presence of self-important greatness, she should announce herself a beggar. Her courage failed—she paused, and made one step back towards her home. But she recalled her former thoughts. "I have need to be humbled," said she; and again proceeded on her way.

As she left the little garden which surrounded her lodging, she perceived an old man who had taken shelter by one of the pillars of the gate.

He shivered in the cold, which found easy entrance through the rags that covered him, and famine glared from his hollow eye. His grey hair streamed on the wind, as he held out the tattered remains of a hat, and said, "Please to help me Lady—I am very poor." He spoke in the dialect of her native land, and the accents went to Laura's heart;—for Laura was in the land of strangers. She had never been deaf to the petitions of the poor; for all the poor of Glenalbert were known to her; and she knew that what she spared from her own comforts, was not made the minister of vice. Her purse was already in her hand, ere she remembered that to give was become a crime.

As the thought crossed her, she started like one who had escaped from sudden danger. "No, I must not give you money," said she, and returned the purse into her pocket, with a pang which taught her the true bitterness of poverty. "I am cold and hungry," said the man, still pleading, and taking encouragement from Laura's relenting eye. "Hungry!" repeated Laura, "then come with me, and I will give you bread;" and she returned to the house to bestow on the old man the humble fare which she had before destined to supply her own wants for the day, glad to purchase by a longer fast the right to feed the hungry.

"In what respect am I better than this poor creature," said she to herself, as she returned with the beggar to the gate, "that I should offer to him with ease, and even with pleasure, what I myself cannot ask without pain. Surely I do not rightly believe that we are of the same dust! the same frail, sinful, perishable dust?"

But it was in vain that Laura continued to argue with herself. In this instance she could only do her duty; she could not love it. Her heart filled, and the tears rose to her eyes. She dashed them away—but they rose again.

When she found herself in Grosvenor Street, she paused for a moment. "What if Lady Pelham should deny my request? dismiss me as a bold intruder? Why, then," said Laura, raising her head, and again advancing with a firmer step, "I shall owe no obligation to a stranger."

She approached the house—she ascended the steps. Almost breathless she laid her hand upon the knocker. At that moment she imagined her entrance through files of insolent domestics, into a room filled with gay company. She anticipated the inquisitive glances—shrunk in fancy from the supercilious examination; and she again drew back her hand. "I shall never have courage to face all this," thought she. While we hesitate, a trifle turns the scale. Laura perceived that she had drawn the attention of a young man on the pavement, who stood gazing on her with familiar curiosity; and she knocked, almost before she was sensible that she intended it.

The time appeared immeasurable till the door was opened by a maid-servant. "Is Lady Pelham at home?" inquired Laura, taking encouragement from the sight of one of her own sex. "No, Ma'am," answered the maid, "my lady is

gone to keep Christmas in ——shire, and will not return for a fortnight. Laura drew a long deep breath, as if a weight had been lifted from her breast; and, suppressing an ejaculation of "thank Heaven," sprung in the lightness of her heart at one skip from the door to the pavement.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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